The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR PETER S. BRIDGES

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 24th of October, 2003. This is an interview with Peter S. Bridges. What does the 'S' stand for?

BRIDGES: Scott.

Q: Scott: S-C-O-T-T.

BRIDGES: Right.

Q: This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

BRIDGES: I was born in New Orleans in June 1932, and that for two particular reasons: one was that my mother was a New Orleanian; secondly, at the time I was born my father was in Georgetown, in what was then British Guyana. I mention this because his profession had a lot to do, I think, with my going into the Foreign Service. He was a businessman who spent almost all of his professional life working for Libby, McNeill & Libby, the food canning firm, and for the first twenty years he was in their export department. He had wanted to be an international businessman ever since he shipped out to sea on a tramp steamer after he finished high school in Norfolk. I myself had always, from the time I was a boy, wanted to do something in foreign affairs; I had assumed, when I was a boy, that I would follow him into Libby's. One Saturday morning, when I was about 10 years old, he said, "Oh, no, you can't do that." I said, "Why not?" and he

said, “We have an anti-nepotism rule. We don’t hire children.” I was dismayed, and I think at that point decided that if I couldn’t join Libby’s, I wouldn’t go into business. I’d do something else. But it took me a while to figure out what.

Q: Okay. Well, let’s talk first about the Bridges family. Where did they come from, and what’s the background on the Bridges?

BRIDGES: The Bridges family is from Gloucester County in Tidewater Virginia, and they were farmers there for a very long time. My oldest traceable ancestor there is a man named Simon Stubblefield who got a land grant in Gloucester in 1688. The Bridges must have come from England; I don't know when they came, but my ancestor Robinson Bridges was farming in Gloucester in 1782. The Bridges were farmers, prosperous I think but not rich. My grandfather had a farm and a country store, and was the local postmaster. He also had 12 children, my father being the youngest, and with all that family the post office was called Bridges. So my father was actually born in Bridges, Virginia, which no longer exists as a post office but is still seen as a locality on some maps. My mother, as I said, came from New Orleans, and she had met my father when he was working out of New Orleans for Libby's, into Latin America. They were married in New Orleans, and he was then transferred to company headquarters in Chicago. So I grew up in Chicago.

Q: Did your father go to college, or did he go right into-

BRIDGES: He went to the University of Virginia for one year, he and his next oldest brother. I believe their tuition was paid by their oldest brother. After they had been at Charlottesville for a year the oldest brother got married, and my uncle Hughes and my father Charles Bridges decided they couldn’t ask their brother to pay their tuition while he was also supporting a new wife. So they went rambling out to the Midwest, where they thought of going to college. They finally enrolled in the University of Chicago but, according to my father’s story, they never quite got to class because there was a class of girls learning archery on the Midway, and they would stop to watch the girls shooting bows and arrows and never got to class. Eventually they decided they had to do something else. They saw an ad in the paper for a marvelous institution that would give you a college education in one year for $100. So they enrolled in that, with pretty much the last of their money, but very soon discovered that this was *not* the institution that they needed, and so decided to get their money back and go home to Norfolk. Question was, who was going to approach the head of the school. They drew straws. My father lost and went to the director with a sob story that their mother was dying in Virginia and they needed their money back so they could go home and bury their mother before they could, of course, resume their studies in Chicago. My father said that he was so convincing that he got the money back, and that this made him decide to become a salesman. So he became a salesman.

Q: How did he get involved at Libby’s?

BRIDGES: Well, again, he had shipped out to sea for a year and he wanted to do

something in foreign business. He got a job at Libby's, but on the domestic side, in the sales department and pushed and pushed, and after what I think was three or four years he got into the export department and worked in that department for, oh, the next 20 years.

Q: Was this mainly in the South American circuit?

BRIDGES: Yes. He worked out of New Orleans into the Caribbean and Latin America from 1927 - I still have his old passports - until after he was married in 1931. I was born in '32 at which point he transferred to Chicago, still in the export department but not working all the time into the Caribbean and South America.

Q: What was your mother's maiden name?

BRIDGES: Her maiden name was Devlin. She was the granddaughter of a man who was one of four brothers who left County Donegal in Ireland before the famine to emigrate to America. The oldest of the brothers, Daniel Devlin, settled in Louisville, where he opened, finally, a jeans factory. He had been a merchant tailor when he came from Ireland. He had a very successful business life and eventually ended up in New York City. His youngest brother, my great-grandfather William Devlin, went south down the Mississippi. He was the only one of the four to really go down the river, but one of my great-uncles told me once that apparently his eldest brother Daniel - the most successful one - had for a time been a clerk on a Mississippi river steamboat, and told his youngest brother William, "You ought to go south, it's a big rich country down there." So my great-grandfather ended up on the Atchafalaya river in Louisiana and married there. His first wife died without having any children and then, at the age of 56, he married Mary Roussel, the 22 year old daughter of his neighbor, and they had six children, the oldest of whom was my grandfather.

Q: And what type of business did your great-grandfather own?

BRIDGES: Before the Civil War my great-grandfather was a merchant in Paterson, Louisiana. I have seen his account books which are in the Historic New Orleans Collection. For a time he also worked with his two oldest brothers, who owned Devlin & Company, a clothing manufacturer in New York City. My great-grandparents moved to New Orleans after my grandfather was born, and he had a real estate development company there. They had quite a lot of money, the last of which seems to have leaked out in the Great Depression.

Q: And your grandfather did what?

BRIDGES: My grandfather, Daniel Joseph Devlin, studied at Georgetown University, and then went back to New Orleans and went to Tulane Law School. Then he decided to get married, in 1905. He realized that a struggling lawyer probably wouldn't be able to support his family, so he sold appliances for a while, and eventually after several years began managing a paint manufacturing company in New Orleans; he did that until he was

probably 78 years old. He managed it, but he didn't own it.

Q: Where did your mother go to school?

BRIDGES: My mother graduated from Newcomb College, the women's college of Tulane University.

Q: Was she set for a career or was this more of a tradition at the time?

BRIDGES: She really had no money; my grandfather had struggled to put all his four children through Tulane. There were two boys and two girls; the younger daughter was my mother. Her older sister, Angela, became a teacher. My mother had studied art in college and got a job with the New Orleans Times Picayune doing artistic work for the newspaper. But she was fired early in the Depression, I think she must have been pleased when my father came along and married her. They had a very happy marriage, but I think it may have come at a good time for her.

Q: Did you grow up in Chicago?

BRIDGES: I did.

Q: Where in Chicago?

BRIDGES: The first 15 years of my life we always lived in the South Side, since my father's company had its headquarters there, in the old Union Stockyard which no longer exists. So we were pretty well bound to live on the South Side. My parents bought their first house in 1938. I was six years old, and it was at 96th and Claremont Avenue, in what is called Beverly Hills, just inside the city limits.

Q: How did you find life in Beverly Hills?

BRIDGES: Well, you have to be Irish to survive. There are a number of latter-day novels written by a Catholic priest named Andrew Greeley, who describes Beverly Hills as a richer, more elegant Beverly Hills than I remember. But still an Irish Beverly Hills. I remember very well playing football one day at Ridge Park and the kids got into a discussion on who was Irish and who was not. I got by because my mother's maiden name was Devlin. But Tom Harrigan, or Tom Murphy or some other Irish type lit into Leo Pavletic. They said, "But you're not Irish!" and Leo Pavletic said, "But I am," and explained how Pavletic was an ancient Irish name. Years later I realized he was Croatian. But again, you had to be Irish to survive.

Q: How was home? Was this a "you all come home for meals and talk about events and all?"

BRIDGES: Oh, indeed. My father traveled a fair amount. When I was five, he was in

Africa on a business trip and was gone six months. So my mother took me and my sister, who was just a year old, and went back and lived with her parents in New Orleans. So I went to kindergarten in New Orleans. My father was always on long, fascinating trips, and I envied him very much. He was the first American businessman to buy a round the world air ticket for business purposes in 1939. He took the Pan American *China Clipper* from San Francisco to Manila, went down to what was then the Dutch East Indies, and Hong Kong, Singapore, and then ended up in Australia. He was there when the Second War started with the German invasion of Poland. And the Australians would not let him continue westward to India and Europe, so he had to turn around and come back.

Q: What were the politics... Was he a Democrat?

BRIDGES: No, he was a Republican. I can't tell you all the reasons... one of his colleagues at Libby's was Edward Willkie, the brother of Wendell Willkie who was the Republican presidential candidate in 1940.

Q: Did politics intrude in some of your conversations?

BRIDGES: You mean in our family?

Q: Yes.

BRIDGES: Well, in the early days, when I was a little boy, I was more of a listener than a participant. My Louisiana family were Republicans, which was a pretty rare breed in the South in those days. That had partly to do with the fact that they considered themselves more liberal than the Democrats, and it had much to do with the fact that they all hated Huey Long. I can remember hearing lots of talk about that when I was I a child. Later on, I suppose beginning with the time I was in college and then graduate school, I had some pretty serious differences with my father over politics. I certainly didn't agree with him on a number of things. I did vote - the first time I voted in a presidential election - I voted for Eisenhower, but that was the only time I voted for a Republican president.

Q: In Beverly Hills was it... well gangs is the wrong time, but a bunch of guys you hung around with...

BRIDGES: Sure. But they were mostly - I should say I was raised a Catholic, my mother was a Roman Catholic and my father was not, so he had to agree upon marrying my mother that the kids would be raised Catholic. So we were. And I attended a Catholic elementary school, Christ the King School, which is the one that Andrew Greeley writes about in his novels, although he calls it "Saint Praxides." Anyway, the kids I hung around with were mainly from Christ the King School - there was a public elementary school across the way and I had a couple of friends from there, but it was mainly the boys in my class.

Q: How Catholic were you?

BRIDGES: Oh, in those days I was very Catholic. I became an altar boy, when I suppose I was eight years old, and I can still recite most of the responses to the Latin Mass. There was only one priest, the pastor, Father Gleason, and he would come around once a month and talk to each class and I recall mainly he said, "Pray for a vocation, pray that the Lord will want you to go to the seminary or the convent." There were probably 40 of us who graduated from that school in 1945, and I don't know about the girls, but four of the boys went to the seminary. And one of them, Joseph Seitz, became, years later, the pastor of Christ the King. Another one, whose father was a police lieutenant, went I think unwillingly, but they wanted to have one member of the family become a priest, and that was gonna be Jimmy Oakley. But Jimmy Oakley, I discovered many years later, got out of the seminary and became a judge in Chicago and about ten years ago he was in the State Penitentiary - I believe they caught him in some sting operation for corruption.

Q: Did Chicago politics intrude at all in your...

BRIDGES: No, not when I was a boy, I can't recall that it did. When I was 15 and halfway through high school, my father and mother moved to Hinsdale, which is a suburb 17 miles west of the Chicago Loop. So I had my last two years of high school in Hinsdale.

Q: In grammar school and elementary school and high school, what were your favorite subjects?

BRIDGES: English above everything else. For many years I believed I was going to be a teacher, a teacher of English. I was good at arithmetic, but when I got to high school I was terrible at higher math. I was good at arithmetic and good at English; in general I was a pretty good student. I taught myself to read, so I basically skipped first grade or was promoted after a couple of weeks to the second grade.

Q: Were there any books that stick out in your mind that you were reading that you really enjoyed or were very influential?

BRIDGES: As a boy... well I read Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn when I was young. My parents had bought the trilogy by Nordhoff and Hall about the mutiny on the Bounty. And I read and re-read Pitcairn's Island many times. My father came back from his trip to Africa in 1938 with a copy of Northwest Passage by Kenneth Roberts that he had bought in Cairo. And that became my most beloved book, and that has something to do with the fact that I went to Dartmouth College to study: that was Rogers Rangers country.

Q: When I think about it, I think the most influential book I read was Kenneth Robert's Oliver Wiswell, because it gave me a feel that there was a more to a revolution than one side.

BRIDGES: I read Oliver Wiswell, and I agree it had an effect on me too.

Q: And I talked to someone else who read it and came up with that, too. For many of us it was an eye opener-

In high school did you get involved in anything...

BRIDGES: I was on the wrestling team, I was on the school assembly. I discovered that when we moved to Hinsdale, I knew no one. I had absolutely no friends. Here I am going into my junior year of high school, and everybody else at school had studied together since they were small children. So that was a little bit hard, I felt myself an outsider but I was welcomed, and by the end of my junior year I was one of the gang and it was a good gang. There was a particular amount of spirit in that class that I was in, and in fact we are going to have our 55th reunion next year.

Q: The high school was public rather than Catholic.

BRIDGES: Yes, it was Hinsdale Township High School. I should say that in Chicago, before we moved to Hinsdale, for my first two years of high school I went to what was then called Morgan Park Military Academy. This was a small boy's military school on 111th street, on the south side of Chicago. I was sent there because the public high school was believed to be not too good and the nearest boy's Catholic school was in a bad neighborhood five or six miles away; so my parents decided to send me to this small military school. Which was all right, but the drawback from my point of view was that it was all boys - there were no girls, though sometimes I saw some of the girls I went to grade school with.

Q: By the time you got to Hinsdale High, what was the social life like?

BRIDGES: Well, it was less highly developed in the organizational sense than what my wife was experiencing at the same point. She was in a public high school in Chicago, they had sororities and they organized dances - we did things less formally; I can't remember too many dances at the school. But we got together, we did things together, including drinking I must say; fortunately there were no drugs on the scene at that point, but I did learn to drink alcohol when I was pretty young.

Q: How about movies? Were these a big part of the life?

BRIDGES: Sure. There were a lot of drive-in movies and so, often we would take girls on dates to the drive-ins. Sure.

Q: While you were at Hinsdale High were you being pushed to go anywhere as far as a career or college or anything like that?

BRIDGES: No. My father and my mother both basically left my choice of career to me. They were going to encourage me, I think, in whatever I wanted to do if it wasn't too

crazy. By the time I was in high school I thought I was going to be a teacher. My mother's sister was one year older, as I mentioned earlier, and had always been a teacher. By that time she had become principal of the lower school at Isidore Newman School in New Orleans, which I think is probably the best private school in the South. I too was going to be a teacher, but I probably wasn't thinking much, probably wasn't too concerned at 16 or 17, about exactly what I was going to be.

Q: Did the University of Chicago have any attraction at that time?

BRIDGES: When I was at military academy, we were all given the entrance examination for the University of Chicago, which at that time was permitting people to enter as undergraduates after three years of high school. I took the exam and somehow passed it; it was a very difficult exam. But I had no thought of going to the University of Chicago. I really thought I was going to study at Carleton College in Minnesota. In those days when you took the College Boards, you had to state choices - first, second and third - and I put Carleton College as first, Dartmouth College as second, and Princeton as third. I then discovered that several of my classmates from Hinsdale were hoping to go to Dartmouth, and so I changed my order of courses in hopes of being with them, and also perhaps because I remembered Northwest Passage. I put Dartmouth as my first choice and I was accepted by Dartmouth, and I went there, as did four other of my classmates from high school, which was quite remarkable. There were about 170 graduating in my high-school class - so let's say half, or 85, were young men - and five of us ended up in the class of 1953 at Dartmouth.

Q: While you were growing up, did World War II affect you at all-was this something you were aware of?

BRIDGES: Oh, of course, very much. My father did not go to war; he used to lament that he had been too young for the First World War and was too old for the Second. I can remember that before we were in the war, after the Germans had occupied the Netherlands and while the Dutch were still holding onto the Dutch East Indies, my father was a go-between between the Libby's manager in Jakarta and the manager's family who were in the Netherlands. They couldn't correspond directly, so the people in the Netherlands would write my father in Chicago and he would simply re-envelope the letters and send them on to the Dutch East Indies, and vice versa. I still have somewhere some envelopes with the Nazi censor stickers and the Dutch censor stickers from the Dutch East Indies. The war was very much with us, especially from the time of Pearl Harbor, but I think even before that.

After my father had his around-the-world trip in September 1939, he came back and then that fall took ship across the Atlantic to go to England. His passport shows that he got visas from France and Germany, but I guess that after arriving in the U.K. he decided it wasn't feasible to go on to the continent. But he did spend a few weeks in the United Kingdom where Libby's had milk-canning plants. And he came back - they had issued him a gas mask - and I remember showing all my boy friends the gas mask my father had

gotten in London. In the summer of 1945, just after V-E Day, my father and two Libby's colleagues were the first American businessmen whom the Allied High Command permitted to visit the European continent. Libby's had food plants in France, Belgium, Netherlands, and Germany, and it was important to get them back into full production before the coming winter, when for all we knew the Europeans might starve.

Q: You were at Dartmouth from when to when?

BRIDGES: From 1949 to 1953.

Q: What was your initial impression of Dartmouth?

BRIDGES: Well, I should say that it was totally new to me. I had never even been in New England until I took the train from Chicago to White River Junction, Vermont. It was a new world. I had been seventh in my graduating class in high school out of 170. So I felt that was pretty good and I never had to study hard to get good marks, and I landed at Dartmouth in a group of young men who had been to Exeter, Andover, who had been to one or another prep school in the East; basically they had already done the equivalent of a college year or so. All of a sudden, I was against very stiff competition and it was hard. My freshman year was very hard for me. I loved the outdoors; I grew to love the outdoors still more when I was there. I joined the Dartmouth Outing Club and my friend Anson Mark and I maintained ten miles of the Appalachian Trail on weekends and did a great amount of hiking. You couldn't, and I think it's still the case that you can't, join a fraternity at Dartmouth until the end of your freshman year. I didn't get into the fraternity I thought I was going to get into, and that was sort of a shock, but early in my sophomore year I joined the fraternity of my choice-well, it was my second choice, but it was the one where I found most of my friends had gone. And it was they who helped me get into it.

Q: Which one?

BRIDGES: It was Alpha Delta Phi. It was eventually kicked off campus and came back as Alpha Delta. Sometime after I had finished college, maybe ten years after, there was an Alpha Delta Phi who had decided to write movies and he based a rather well known film on Alpha Delta Phi house, and that film was *Animal House*. *Animal House* is based on recollections of the Alpha Delta Phi at Dartmouth and there is some resemblance. Or at least there was.

Q: Yes, that was a pretty raunchy movie, but how did you find it? I know this was a little before you, but I went to Williams - they're both stuck out in the middle of nowhere - but Dartmouth has the reputation of: "Dartmouth's in town again. Run, girls, run!" Was it hard finding female companionship in all that?

BRIDGES: Well, there were townies, but few of us tried to find a girlfriend in Hanover. There was a women's junior college nearby, Colby Junior College in New London, New Hampshire, but somehow we didn't think too much of that. So many of us went down to

Northampton, to Smith, and Mount Holyoke, and that was sort of our basic operation. Sometimes we'd go down to the Boston area for the weekend. And if we could, we'd try to get a girl to come up to Hanover for a football weekend or something like that. But there was a shortage of women and that meant, of course, long drives on weekends, but it was fun in a way.

Q: I did a lot of hitchhiking in those days.

BRIDGES: I did a fair amount, too.

Q: I guess there was something there called academics... What were you doing...

BRIDGES: I started out as an English major, still thinking I was going to teach, and finished my freshman year and went to work in a supermarket, back in Hinsdale, back in Illinois, and the Korean War began, in the summer of 1950. When we went back to college, my impression of walking across the college green in the autumn of 1950 was that all that anybody was talking about was when they were going to get drafted, when they would have their pre-induction physical. In the event, probably four or five or six of us got drafted out of 3,000 young men, because they introduced exemptions for full time students. And that was a great blow to me. I had expected to be in the Army before the end of my sophomore year, and I didn't much give a damn about my studies as a result. And as a further result, I did very poorly scholastically my sophomore year. I ended up spending a lot of time in the library; Dartmouth has a fine library. So I basically said to hell with Speech II and Sociology I and so forth, and started cruising the stacks of the library, and I came on 19th century Russian literature. And I thought, here is something I could really get interested in. Dartmouth had a small Russian department, and I changed my major from English to Russian, and my grades began to go up, and I did quite well in my junior year and still better in my senior year as a Russian major.

Q: How was Russian taught in those days?

BRIDGES: It was taught well at Dartmouth, this was before the time of Professor John Rassias, who has been well known for his intensive language courses at Dartmouth for the last 15 to 20 years. I was before him, but I had an intensive Russian course, it was nine hours a week compared to the standard three hours. There were two instructors. One was an American named John Washburn, the son of a professor of French at Dartmouth. John Washburn had, I think, probably the best knowledge of the Russian language of anyone I ever met who was not from a Russian or Slavic family. The other instructor was a woman named Nadezhda Koroton. She was a Great Russian, born in Russia before the Bolshevik revolution, and had lived in the Soviet Union until World War II, when she ended up as a laborer in Germany and then came here as a displaced person. And between the two of them I had a very good course of language for two years, and the summer I graduated, in 1953, I went to the Middlebury College summer Russian school where one had to agree to speak only Russian except in the stores downtown.

Q: What did this point towards?

BRIDGES: Well, it was going to point toward academia. The Dartmouth Russian department was headed by a Russian-American with the name of Dmitri von Mohrenschildt, who came from a family of Baltic Germans in pre-1917 St. Petersburg. I told him that I wanted to go on to graduate studies in Russian at Harvard. He had gotten his Ph.D. at Columbia and he convinced me that Columbia was somehow more serious and a better place to study than Harvard. So I went to Columbia in the fall of 1953 and was working ultimately toward a Ph.D. in Slavic languages and Russian literature, but I was also a student in what was then the Russian Institute, and is now called the Harriman Institute thanks to Averell Harriman's gift of several million dollars. So while I took courses in Russian literature and Slavic languages, I also took courses through the Russian Institute in other fields having to do with Russia and the Soviet Union - law, history, economics and so forth.

My professor in the Slavic languages department was a man named Simmons who went to meet his Maker some time ago. Ernest Simmons was a man who had written big books about a number of major 19th century Russian writers. I didn't like him. He insisted that some of us study Soviet literature; I was not interested in doing that, I was only interested in reading pre-revolution Russian literature. But he decreed that the students who entered his seminar in even-numbered years would study pre-revolutionary literature, while those who entered in odd-numbered years were condemned to Soviet literature. I came in 1953, so I was in the Soviet group. Simmons was a man who had studied in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, one of a small number of Americans who had done so. There was no indication that he had been a Communist, in fact I don't recall him giving many indications about his politics. This was the McCarthy era and if he was a Communist, or far left in his views, it would not have been sensible for him to say so. I recall he insisted that we should consider as a philosophical question whether socialist realism could produce valid works of literature; it was pretty clear that Ernest Simmons thought the answer was yes, and I didn't. I was far from convinced. That made it a little hard on me, I didn't care for that. I really wanted to study 19th century literature and I didn't much care for Ernie Simmons, although we had as I recall no personal differences.

The autumn I went to Columbia I met my future wife, Mary Jane Lee. She was the first female Standard & Poor fellow in the Columbia graduate school of business. By the end of that year she got her degree and went back to Chicago to work on LaSalle Street for an investment counseling firm, while I was going on for a Masters degree which would take me still another year, and then a Ph.D. My second year there I got a generous Ford Foundation scholarship; Ford had started a new program of scholarships in the Soviet and East European field. I heard that they paid even more for a married scholarship recipient. Mary Jane, my wife-to-be, liked Manhattan; she liked it better than I did. I didn't much care for the bigness of the place. So we could have got married, and she could have easily found a good job on Wall Street. Not necessarily a high-paying job, women were discriminated against in those years. But I wanted to support my wife, I didn't like Ernie Simmons, and I didn't want to stay in Manhattan. This was the beginning of my second

year in graduate school. I was casting about for things to do, I went to the university employment office, and there on the board was an ad saying "Take the Foreign Service Examinations." And all of a sudden a light went on, and I took the Foreign Service examinations.

Q: Well, I'd like to go back to Dartmouth and Columbia. How about the Soviet Union? Obviously the Korean War was on, the Cold War was unfolding. What were you getting about the Soviets and Russians and all...

BRIDGES: Well, certainly I had a good understanding of the Soviet system by the time I finished my undergraduate education, certainly a better understanding in graduate school. By the time I finally got to Moscow I was not surprised with what I found, in many ways. In other ways I was. My graduate-school days were the days of McCarthyism, but obviously that didn't deter me from studying things Russian. Although much more is known now about what went on in the Soviet Union after 1917, we had some pretty good studies. Merle Fainsod at Harvard, for example, had published a book or two based on documents that the Germans had found when they invaded the Soviet Union. One was on Soviet rule in Smolensk.

Q: There was also a lot of picking at those involved in the academic field and at McCarthyism. Did your study of Russian literature move over into the history of Russia and particularly modern Russia?

BRIDGES: Yes, in fact the masters essay that I wrote - again, as I say, I had to work on something in the Soviet field - my masters essay had the title The Character of the Party Secretary in Postwar Soviet Novels, and I read, for purposes of writing that essay, about a hundred postwar Soviet novels. Most of them were pure trash, pure propaganda. One of the results of that was that when I served at Moscow in the early '60s every now and then I would meet an old Stalinist writer and I'd say, "Oh, yes, I remember you wrote such and such." And he'd say, "My God, you read that?"

Q: Yes, I was going to say... There were some good things, but I particularly like the classics...

BRIDGES: Well, in the early days of the revolution there had been some really good things written. For example there was a pair of writers whose pen names were Ilf and Petrov, and they wrote a couple of amazingly funny novels. Their hero was Ostap Bender, who liked to say, "My father was a Turkish subject." And he was a two-bit petty criminal in the early 1920s; it was very, very funny. I think Ilf and Petrov both ended up in labor camps but for a while they could publish...

Q: Did you, particularly at Columbia, get involved in intellectual left, predominantly Jewish, coming out of Germany in the '30s? Was this part of campus politics?

BRIDGES: Well probably in some areas. I discovered at Columbia that there was a group

of students who considered themselves pure intellectuals. People who loved to sit in the snack bar and have a cup of coffee and talk about Hegelianism. And I was just not into Hegel; I was maybe not bright enough, or maybe my inclination ran in different ways but I was not really interested in talking about dialectics. And I never really read as much of Marx as I should have.

Q: So, you took the Foreign Service exam when?

BRIDGES: I took the Foreign Service exam in the fall, I think it may have been Christmas vacation, of 1954 in Chicago. It was a three and a half day examination.

Q: I think it falls in the first week of December or something like that...

BRIDGES: Well, I was in Chicago for Christmas.

Q: I took the exam in '53, and it was a long, long stretch...

BRIDGES: Oh, it was hard, and I finally got the results after a month or two, and I'd only flunked the economics part. I think passing was 70%, and I got 68% in economics, and everything else I did pretty well. So, overall I passed, with an overall score of eighty-something percent.

Q: Had the Foreign Service and a career in diplomacy been on your radar at all prior...

BRIDGES: No, no, not at all. I have, I hope I still have, two friends from the Foreign Service named George Furness, who entered the Service with me in 1957, and Nathaniel Davis. The two of them were boyhood friends - their families had vacation houses near one another in the White Mountains, I think. I remember George Furness saying to me once that when he was maybe 12 years old and Nat Davis was around 15, Nat had said, "I'm going to join the Foreign Service, and you ought to do that too, George!" And well, I suppose I had heard of the Foreign Service by the time I was 21, but barely more than that, I won't exaggerate. It was not something I had thought about doing.

Q: Well, how about something about your wife? What was her background?

BRIDGES: Mary Jane was born in Cleveland, but her family moved to Chicago when she was a very little girl and she grew up on the North Side while I grew up on the South Side. She went to Sullivan High School, a public high school, and then graduated from Northwestern.

Q: So your wife came from a sort of a real business background?

BRIDGES: My future father-in-law had been born in Brooklyn, New York; both of his parents had emigrated from Norway in the late 19th century. And he had become the comptroller of a corporation in Cleveland, but he lost his job in the Depression. Those

were rough days. My own father had his salary cut by 35% a few months after I was born, but at least he kept his job. My future father-in-law was out of work for some time. Fortunately his young wife, my future mother-in-law, was a nurse and she kept working. She came from northeastern Ohio; she could trace her family, the Bartholomews, back to 17th century Massachusetts. Anyway, eventually my father-in-law to be found a job with the Internal Revenue Service, and they based him in Chicago. The family name was Lee. His father was originally named Fagerli, but when he came to this country he Americanized the name to Lee. My father-in-law Andrew Lee and his family spent the rest of their years in Chicago and that's where my wife grew up.

Q: How did she feel about the Foreign Service?

BRIDGES: Perhaps if she had realized what it was going to be like she would have said, "Let's do something different." And perhaps we would have. She and I were happy in the Foreign Service, but her problem for decades was finding things to do. She was not simply going to sit at home and raise children and have ladies to tea or give dinner; she wanted to work, and she did. Over the 48 years we've been married, she has found an amazing range of kinds of work.

Q: You took the oral exam...

BRIDGES: I took the oral exam in Washington. I had to come here from New York to take the orals, in April 1955. I was going to get my masters degree and certificate at the Russian Institute in May, and get married in June, and then go into the Army because the draft was still on. I had counted on there being an end to the draft system by the time I finished my education, but it didn't work that way.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions, or how the oral exam went?

BRIDGES: I do, indeed. My recollection was that it was like going before a Congressional committee, that I was sitting below the level of the gentlemen who were sitting in judgment on me. Their chairs were a little bit elevated and there were about four or five of them, three of them were Foreign Service officers, one was in Labor, and I can't remember if there was one in the civil service. They had the decency at least to put a glass of water on the table in front of me. One of the examiners said, "Oh, you were born in Louisiana, so you must know a fair amount about Louisiana history." And he kind of drew me out and, after about ten minutes he said, "Tell me about Benjamin Butler." Who the hell was Benjamin Butler? Beast Butler... I know a hell lot more about Beast Butler now than I used to, at the time I couldn't think who he was and when the examiner said Butler had been the Union general who occupied New Orleans, I was feeling rather unhappy. And there was another examiner, a Foreign Service officer who asked what I knew about Liberia. Well, I didn't know much about Liberia, I knew that the capital was Monrovia and I knew how it had been founded and I basically knew there was a major American rubber company there, but I was trying to remember which one. He drew me out, and finally said "Well, what would you say if you did get hired by the Foreign

Service, and you got sent to the embassy in Monrovia, what would you think about that?" I said, "Well, I suppose it would be all right, I have never thought about that." And he said, "Let me tell you about it. I just came back from Monrovia, I was there for three years, and it was the most God-awful place I ever saw." And he went on at some length about it, and then said, "What would you say now?" My throat went totally dry. Fortunately I drank some water and my voice came back. They were hard on me.

Q: I took the oral exam about the same time in '55, and the head of the panel, a very distinguished man, scared the hell out of me.

BRIDGES: I can't remember the names of any of the examiners. But let me say parenthetically, years later, 25 years later, when I was working in Personnel I very much wanted to take part in the examination process. Finally I got to sit in on a couple of panels and do oral interviews, and at the time the instructions were to not raise the pressure, the candidate's going to be under pressure already, don't try to raise it. Which is good advice, but that was advice not given to examiners in 1955.

Q: How did it work, you had the military coming at you, and the Foreign Service.

BRIDGES: After I was told that I passed the oral examination, which was a great delight, I remember walking out of that Quonset hut on the edge of the old State Department building and walking down Constitution Avenue and walking up into the grounds of the Capitol under the big trees and thinking, "I am going to be a servant of the Republic."

But then came the practical question; I had assumed the draft would be over and it was not. I made a last minute stab at getting a commission. I went down to see the Army and the Navy in Manhattan, and said, "Look, I'm going to have a graduate degree in Soviet studies, can't you use me as young lieutenant or ensign." They said No, so I saw I was going to have to spend two years in the Army, and I wrote the Department that I would like to have a two year period before I joined the State Department so I could do my Army service, and they said sure. They did not try, I think they never tried, to get young officers exempted from military service. What I should have done was join the Foreign Service and wait to see if and when I would get drafted. At the time I did go in the Army married men were not exempted from the draft but married men with at least one child were. If I had just gone straight into the State Department and we had had our first child when we did, he would have come before I got my draft call.

But anyway, I told the Department I would do my Army service from '55 to '57, and would like to join the Foreign Service in 1957. I got married, we had a honeymoon, we came back to Chicago, and I called the draft board and said, "When are you going to take me?" and they said, "It'll be about a year.", and I said, "No, no, I know there is some lag, but I know that I can volunteer to be drafted and that will speed it up." They said, "We assumed you would volunteer but there is a big delay, it will take a year." That was kind of crushing. What was I to do for a year? I had told the Department I didn't want to join them for two years, and they had made their plans probably. I called my father, and said,

"What can be done?" Well, he knew someone who was a member of the Illinois Selective Service Commission, and he called this guy and said, "Look, I have this son who wants to get into the Army, not to stay out, what can be done?" and the gentleman said, "Well, it's a well kept secret but the Army is required to accept a small number of two year enlistments." And of course the draft was for two years too. And he said, "What I can do for your son is call you, Charlie, and tell you later what day of the month the Army is going to open up the recruiting office for two year enlistments." And that's what happened, and so at five in the morning on August 28th, 1955 I was down at the Chicago recruiting office and signed up for two years in the Army.

Q: So what did you do?

BRIDGES: They shipped me off to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for basic training, and after a couple of weeks they notified us that if any of us knew a foreign language we could take a test. So I took the Russian and Spanish tests, and I got a perfect score on the Russian test. They called me in and said, "Well, we're going to send you to an intelligence unit in Germany, but meanwhile you have to have eight additional weeks training because the rules say you have to have 16 weeks training to go overseas. Just a mere formality, so we are going to give you the cheapest thing there is, and that is to say we will leave you here at Fort Leonard Wood and give you combat engineer training." So they gave me combat engineer training. There were three of us in the combat engineer training company who had college degrees. One was a young bass baritone from the Berlin Opera who had come back from Germany to get drafted, and one was a young lawyer from Wisconsin, and they spoke German and I had Russian. So we learned to build Bailey bridges and things like that, and in the end they shipped half the company to California to go to Korea; fortunately I was in the other half, I didn't want to go to Korea even though the war was over, because the Army in Korea was living in tents in the mud. They shipped the rest of us to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and I was given a little primitive IBM card that had my assignment. What they had done was assign me to Company A, 97th Engineer Battalion, in France. And I thought, "Well, that's not an intelligence unit in Germany", so I got to the personnel unit, and said, "Hey, what's this stuff, I've got an M.A. in Soviet studies." They said, "Well, they must have forgotten to put it on your record, but that's all right, you get to France and they'll take care of it." So I went to Company A of the 97th Engineer Battalion in Toul, France. The battalion headquarters was in Verdun, and when I reported in there the personnel officer, a warrant officer named Jay M. Jones, said, "You've got a college education, you know how to type." And I said, "Yes, sir, I have a college education, but I don't know how to type", and he said "Well, I need a clerk typist, you know how to type." So I stayed in the battalion headquarters at the Caserne Maginot in Verdun for the rest of my Army life. And my wife paid her way over and we had quite a happy time touring Europe when I wasn't sitting in the dank caserne. Incidentally, I told much of my Army history in an essay I wrote for the Virginia Quarterly Review several years ago.

Q: And here they spent all this money training people in Russian at the Army Language School. Has anybody ever said anything about it or...

BRIDGES: I've told people the story, but not to make a case about it. Actually, financially, it turned out to be a plus because if I had been sent to some unit in Germany, I would not as a married private have been entitled to an off-base housing allowance. For that you had to be a corporal with at least seven years service or a sergeant or a commissioned officer. But in France, because there was no housing provided, they paid a housing allowance to married men in lieu of housing, and by God they paid me $40 a month in lieu of the housing I would not have been entitled to in Germany. So we had $40 a month for housing and basically I found a garret in the top of a plumber's house - very nice people named Prévot - and I paid $40 a month for it.

Q: Did you have any adventures during your time as a clerk typist?

BRIDGES: The only real adventure came just after my wife came. The battlefields from the First War lie just east of Verdun, and before my wife came I roamed over them quite a bit with a buddy of mine, Bill Libby, who later became a distinguished professor in California. Two of the forts were open to visitors, Douaumont and Vaux, but there were a number of other old moldering underground forts. And a master sergeant who was an assistant to the commanding general went on a picnic with his wife on one battlefield and never came back. The belief was that he must have fallen down a ventilating shaft; there was a moldy board across the shaft, and there seemed to be footsteps that went just halfway across. They looked down the shaft and it looked like there was rubble at the bottom, so they thought the sides of the shaft must have fallen in on him. They tried to send a man down the shaft, but stuff was falling, so our company was sent in from a side tunnel and that was a little bit scary; we only did one eight-hour shift but we were crawling through a horizontal tunnel with stuff falling in from the ceiling which was about three feet high. We got about a half mile in, probably most of the way to the shaft, when we were relieved by another squad, and I got home to sleep for a few hours and I came back and they had managed to send someone down into the shaft and found the sergeant's body. He had indeed fallen in. That was a little bit hairy, I didn't much care for that.

Q: They're still digging out unexposed ammunition even now.

BRIDGES: Oh, yes. There were signs at the edge of the battlefields saying *Defense d'entrer* with skulls and crossbones. Europe was sort of an adventure, Mary Jane and I traveled all we could, we bought a small car and fortunately the personnel clerks in the battalion headquarters were exempted from guard duty or K.P. So I basically did a 40 hour week and had weekends free. The enlisted men didn't have passports, only identification cards, and if we went off base on an overnight pass or leave we had to have orders typed up by the commanding officer. The personnel clerks of course had custody of the leave forms and we certainly didn't like to bother our captain all the time for small trips, so if we wanted to drive Paris on a weekend we would just type up a leave form and sign it.

In the spring of 1957 I was getting close to ending my tour there. My wife was nine-plus months pregnant and was tired of sitting around. One Saturday she said, "Let's go drive over to Trier tomorrow." That was over the border in Germany. We had never been to Trier, but it had Roman ruins. So I went down to the caserne and typed up a leave form permitting me to go across the border to Trier. For some reason we always signed these forms "Carl Sandburg, Captain Commanding." And we went over the border and we saw the Roman ruins and went to have a cup of tea at a café and my wife said, "I think I'm beginning to have labor pains." And here I am a hundred miles off base on the wrong side of the border, illegally, absent without leave. So I had visions of being court martialed and my wife bringing the baby to see me in the stockade. But we drove home very carefully, and the baby was born the next day on the right side of the border in France.

Q: Did you, in your traveling around, get any chance to sample the Foreign Service bit, in Paris, or Strasbourg, or...

BRIDGES: One time. That was the fourth of July of 1956. We read in the Herald Tribune that the ambassador to France, Mr. Bruce, a well-to-do man and a generous one, had let it be known that he was inviting all Americans in France to his Fourth of July reception. You just had to bring a passport or proof of identity to get in the gate. So we and another private and wife drove into Paris. I had to take the car to the Austin garage-we had an Austin A-40 - so I dropped the others off at the reception, and by the time I got back there in about an hour, Mary Jane was all giggles, it was a pretty good punch. It was a modest garden party for 4,000 to 5,000 people. That was my first diplomatic experience.

My next diplomatic experience came in late July, when we were coming back to get me discharged in Brooklyn. I still wasn't perfectly sure when I might get into the Foreign Service. I had gotten a letter, which I still have somewhere, from W. Garland Richardson, the chairman of the board of examiners for the Foreign Service, saying that a chance existed that a small number of Foreign Service officers would be admitted in August 1957, and asking if I would still be interested. I wrote back immediately saying Yes, indeed. And then I heard that I had to be interviewed by the security officer at the Embassy in Paris. This was really last minute; I called the security officer and said, "My wife and I and our baby are leaving on a bus to Paris, and we are being put in some hotel, and then late in the evening we get on a plane to fly to New York, is there a chance that you could see me the hour or two that I am in Paris?" And he said, "Yup." And it was a Friday afternoon, and he said, "I'll be available." And so I said, "I'll be there at five." Well, of course I was late and I got to the embassy at six o'clock on a Friday; it was after business hours, but there was the security officer and he asked me about four questions and said, "I think that's fine." And I did it - I had my satisfactory interview and I got in the Foreign Service the next month.

Q: So you entered the Foreign Service in August 1957? What number was your class?

BRIDGES: I have no idea.

Q: Well, what was your class like?

BRIDGES: It was composed of twenty-eight or thirty people. The orientation course at the time was three months long, and I think it has never been quite that long since the early '60s. It was not as long as it should be; I think three months is not too long a time for an orientation course. But it was disappointing in some ways. We heard nothing about international law, and very little about diplomatic practice. I think there was one afternoon on the drafting of diplomatic notes and diplomatic language. But it was very short on diplomacy. There was certainly a segment on consular affairs, but certainly not enough for somebody who was going to go out and be a consular officer. We visited other agencies, that was an interesting thing to do, we visited Commerce, maybe CIA, I don't remember. I think we went to the Pentagon. It was long enough but not good enough. For a weekend or more we went out to the old Cavalry remount station outside Front Royal which is now the Smithsonian center for breeding exotic animals. We heard a couple of lectures there, and I climbed Old Rag for the first time. There was a lot of camaraderie; we got to be good friends and some of us still are.

Q: Who were some of the people in there?

BRIDGES: There was a young woman named Phyllis Elliot who, almost immediately after we finished, married Bob Oakley and was told that she had to offer her resignation. She did, came back to the Service later, and twice served as an Assistant Secretary of State. There was Bill Luers, who after ambassadorships in Venezuela and Czechoslovakia became president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and is now president of the United Nations Association for the United States. Both John Clingerman and Herbert Donald Gelber eventually became ambassadors in Africa, as did I. Perhaps my best friend from that class was William Lawrence Dutton, who over several decades served overseas in only two countries, Germany and Japan. He was vice consul in Hamburg and he served later in Bonn, but he spent many years in Japan. He got to be quite proficient in the language, and he and his wife, Jane, even bought a vacation house in the mountains in Japan., His final post was as consul general at Kobe-Osaka. He died tragically early, a few years ago, of cancer. He was always a very good friend. A number of these men - there were only two women, one was Phyllis and the other was the daughter of Ambassador Ellis Briggs, Lucy Briggs - many of them left fairly early, I think only a minority of us stayed on until retirement. I don't have figures at hand, but quite a few resigned along the way. One of us, Ronald Steel, was sent to Cyprus as assistant general services officer or something of the sort, and that was not at all what he wanted to do in the Foreign Service, and he resigned and became quite a successful writer and professor; he was the one who wrote the big biography of Walter Lippmann.

Q: While you were there what were you picking up about what you wanted to do and where?

BRIDGES: Well, I wanted to go to Moscow, of course. In those days there was an annual officer preference report which everybody called the April Fool sheet, and which I'm sure

many interviewees have talked about before me. I hoped that my first post would be Moscow, and if not Moscow, some place in Europe, and if not Europe, some place in South America since I speak Spanish as well as Russian. In the event, the Soviet desk in the European Bureau wanted a junior officer who knew Russian, and they took me. So that was my first assignment: two years in the Department, on what was then the Soviet desk in the Office of Eastern European Affairs.

Q: This must be 1957. Who was head of the Soviet department then?

BRIDGES: The officer in charge of Soviet affairs was Charles Stefan. Charlie Stefan was later Deputy Chief of Mission in Sofia and he retired sometime after that. He died within the last several years. The number two was Nathaniel Davis, whom I also worked for many years later when he was Director General of the Foreign Service. He was a fine, inspired and inspiring man to work for. There was Paul Smith, who took medical retirement from the Foreign Service early and then for many years was editor of the USIA magazine Problems of Communism. There is also a younger Paul Smith, who retired recently from being DCM in Moscow. Then there was a marvelous woman, a Civil Service officer named Virginia James, who had came from Frederick, Maryland to work for the War Department as a clerk right out of high school in 1918. She had joined the State Department to work on the old Soviet desk after we recognized the Soviet Union in 1933. She knew everyone in the Soviet field from Lloyd Henderson to Chip Bohlen and George Kennan, and so on and so forth. So that made it great fun for me.

Q: What hunk of the action did you have?

BRIDGES: Well, I had the bottom of it. One of the things they gave me to look at was the question of travel. The Soviet government throughout its existence severely restricted the travel of foreigners in the Soviet Union. Not just Western foreigners, I discovered later, but all foreigners - even their own allies. Beside the areas that were officially out of bounds to foreigners, they would often deny American diplomats the possibility of traveling to places that were supposed to be open to travel. We would retaliate; we would reciprocate. We instituted the same sort of system for Soviet officials in the United States. So I was to keep track of that and make sure that we played tit-for-tat. Beyond that they gave me some minor jobs, and it was a good place to learn; I knew about the Soviet Union and Russia but I didn't know about the United States government and the Soviet Union. Virginia James had a line of file cabinets, probably six or eight of them, with old files on the USSR. We had an archivist named Frances Shugrue. And Frances and Virginia knew where everything was, and whenever Virginia saw something interesting, she would give it to Frances to stick in the files. And occasionally on a Friday afternoon when things were dull, I'd go through Virginia's files and there was an amazing collection of stuff.

Q: How did we view the Soviet Union at that time?

BRIDGES: Well, certainly as a despotic government that was intent on expansion. I got

to see much of the telegraphic traffic between the Department and the embassy in Moscow, but certainly not all of it and I certainly didn't see all of the intelligence. It was a time when the Soviet embassy here was full of intelligence officers who were trying their best to find out everything that was going on in the United States and recruit as many Americans as they could. I had a part in drafting a memorandum on what to do about a Soviet embassy officer who had managed to recruit a young Foreign Service officer. Our paper recommended that he be expelled, but the paper kept going up and down in the office because my drafting was not exactly what Charlie Stefan wanted. Finally he sent it to the office director, and it came back for some changes. By the time the memo went to the Secretary, recommending that this guy be expelled, the 1958 meeting of Soviet and American foreign ministers was about to take place in Geneva. The Soviets apparently thought that we were trying to put one over on them; in other words, that we thought we could expel this guy and they would not retaliate because the Geneva meeting was so close. I think this probably made them mad, so they not only expelled an American but went one up the ladder and expelled the last Chief of Chancery the State Department ever had: David Mark who was the Chief of Chancery, number-three, in Moscow. That was a serious blow to us; I suspect that otherwise David Mark might someday have served as ambassador at Moscow. As it was, he was eventually ambassador to Burundi.

Q: I can't recall the period. Was this case well known of recruiting a Foreign Service officer?

BRIDGES: It didn't get into the press for quite some time. I don't remember the American's name, but he was a junior officer and he had met an officer in the Soviet Embassy at a chess club, or Esperanto club; the Russians used these places to meet people. The Russian invited him to lunch, and the young American accepted, and they had lunch again and after two or three meetings which I don't think the American reported to his boss, the Russian said, "Hey, can you help me? I've got to write a report on the training of American Foreign Service officers and I need some material." And the American said, "Oh, I can't." And the Russian said, "No, nothing sensitive, just printed stuff, public stuff: Congressional committee reports, some issues of the Foreign Service Journal, but if I ask for them they'll say no just because I'm a Soviet officer. But this is all published stuff." And the American said, "Oh, okay." And he got these things for the Russian. About two months later the Russian called and said, "Hey, let's have lunch next week, I have something to tell you." They met and the Russian said, "My report was so well received that I got a big bonus and I insist on sharing it with you." And the American said, "Hmm, okay," and took I think a hundred dollars. The next time they met, the Russian said, "Now I'd like some classified telegrams from your bureau." And the American said, "No." And the Russian said, "Look, you've been taking money from a Soviet official. Now take a little more money and do some more." At this point the American told someone - his boss or somebody - and it all came out. They didn't prosecute the Foreign Service officer; they fired him and they told him to register as a foreign agent. Somebody looking at the list of foreign agents, a journalist I guess, came on his name and tracked down the story. The Russian, whose name was Zaostrovtsev, was expelled and later, last I heard of him, had gotten his name in the papers because -

working, I think, under a slightly different name - he had recruited or tried to recruit an American secretary at some post abroad. So this was his specialty.

Q: What were you getting from people... I guess lots of people in the Soviet bureau had served in the Soviet Union. Did you feel that you were with an elite and well-chosen group?

BRIDGES: Very much. Every now and then somebody like Chip Bohlen would come through the office, or Loy Henderson the Deputy Under Secretary for Management. It was fun because all of these people had served in Moscow and were concerned about the officers working in the Soviet field. At that time, as I learned later, senior officers in the Eastern half of the European Bureau kept up, quite separate from whatever Personnel was doing, a roster of officers who had served in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They would make lists of where somebody might go in the future, and who could fill a particular job in five or seven years. I think it was a useful thing to do.

Q: There were little lists around different areas; the Middle East had one, as did the Far East. Was there anything to dissuade you from becoming a Soviet hand once you were in the Foreign Service?

BRIDGES: No. I expected that from the Soviet desk I would be assigned to Moscow, after I had been there some time. They had assigned three junior officers to Moscow as their first post abroad, and I thought boy, me next. And then it was decided, I think by the security people, that they would no longer send junior officers out to Moscow as their first foreign post. They had to be tried and tested at some other post. So, when I learned that, I started thinking, where shall we go if not Moscow? My wife was half Norwegian; neither of us had been to Norway, and I thought, well, there's an embassy in Oslo. And every day at lunch I would take the bus across the river to the Foreign Service Institute and play Norwegian tapes, and after about a year - my wife had still one older distant cousin in Bergen - I started corresponding with cousin Birger Daviknes in Norwegian. I don't have the letters of course, but he would write me back, in Norwegian. Meanwhile, I hadn't gotten around to putting Oslo on my April Fool sheet. On my last sheet, beside Moscow I had put Bogota and some other Spanish-speaking post. One summer evening when I came home, it was very hot and we were living in a small apartment in the south end of Arlington, we didn't even have air conditioning, my wife said, "I don't care where they send us, just so it's not the tropics; that would just be more Arlington." About ten days later, I came home and said, "Guess what, it's the tropics, we're going to Panama." She took it very well; she figured it couldn't be much hotter than Arlington, and it wasn't.

Q: You went to Panama in 1959 and you were there for how long?

BRIDGES: I was there for two years. I was asked if I would like to extend for a third year, and I was happy to agree. The first year had its difficulties, because there had been riots against the Canal Zone soon after we got there. But then things got much better, and we made a lot of friends, we moved into a better, bigger, nicer apartment, and we changed

ambassadors, and also as a change for the better my first boss was moved out; he was kind of a miserable type, and so things were better in every way and I was to stay a third year. But I still wanted to go to Moscow. My hope was that after I was promoted to Class 6 - I was then an officer of Class 7 - I would be sent to the Army Russian training school at Oberammergau, which was then called U.S. Army Detachment R and is now the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch. In the spring of 1961 I was promoted to class 6, and soon after that an officer came traveling through from the Bureau of Personnel. The Deputy Chief of Mission, John Shillock, kindly invited me and several other officers to lunch to meet this guy, and he said, "Bridges, you've done well and congratulations on your promotion, and do you still want to go to Oberammergau?" And I said, "Yes, what do you think about '62? I've got one more year here." And he said, "Oh, no, you're down on the list for this year." I said, "Oh, my God, when does that start?" He said, "Well, the academic year starts at the end of August, and it's May now so you might be leaving pretty soon." So we left Panama after two years instead of three.

Q: Let's talk a little about Panama. What job did you have in Panama?

BRIDGES: For my first year I was the junior of three political officers. The head of the section was a man who was not a good officer. When I arrived there was no number two, but after a while the number two position was filled by Neil McManus. Neil and his wife Claire became very good friends of ours and we remained that until he died, and we're still friends with Claire. After the first year, or as the first year was ending, the Ambassador who was a career officer named Julian Harrington retired after some years in Panama. When the Panamanians had rioted against the Canal in the autumn of 1959, one of the leaders of the demonstrations was a man named Aquilino Boyd. He owed his un-Castilian name to a grandfather who was an Irishman. Boyd had been foreign minister when he was in his 30s, and Julian Harrington considered him to be sort of a young protégé. And here Boyd was leading demonstrations against the United States, and that was it as far as Mr. Harrington was concerned, and he retired the next year and was replaced by Joseph Farland, a political appointee who had been ambassador to the Dominican Republic. But he was a breath of fresh air, Joe Farland was. He didn't know Spanish, but he knew how to make friends and raise morale. He got off the ship - at that time there were weekly steamships from New York to Cristobal in the Canal Zone, run by the Panama Line which belonged to the Panama Canal Company, which belonged to the U.S. Department of the Army - anyway, Joe Farland and his wife got off the ship and they were met not just by us staff but by a bunch of Panamanian demonstrators saying, "Yankee don't go home, stay here." This meant that our only consulate in Panama, in Colon on the Caribbean side next to Cristobal was being closed by the Department for economy reasons. It was a small post, just two officers. And the Panamanians were saying, "If you close your consulate, we might riot just against the Canal Zone on the first anniversary of the 1959 riots, not to protest against the Canal Company, but in protest because you're closing your consulate and it means you're rendering a negative judgment on Colon." Joe Farland thought that was a very bad reason to riot against the United States. He appealed to the Department not to close the post, but the Department said, "Sorry, the consul and vice consul have been transferred. It's done." Finally, though, they

said, “If you’ve got somebody that you don’t really need you can send him to Colon on a temporary basis, but the post is officially closed to the public.” Mr. Farland decided that I could go over there and keep the flag flying. So for six months I commuted across the continent. I would get on the Panama Railroad in Panama City at seven in the morning and at eight I’d be in Colon, on the other side of the isthmus, and raise the flag, literally, at the consulate and take visa and passport applications and do what I could do in representation. It was a great job for six months, then I came back and for the last six months I was a visa officer in the embassy.

Q: How was our embassy... It was your first post. You were the new boy on the block and were seeing things in a different light than you would after you’d been around for a while. How did you see our embassy work there? Was this a case of neo-colonialism?

BRIDGES: We had enemies coming from both left or right, or maybe from east or west, which is to say that the Panamanians felt that almost everything that the Canal Zone, the Canal Company, was doing except running the canal, was a violation of the bilateral treaties between the United States and Panama. So we had very hard times; I’d almost say we had more difficulties with Panama than we did with the Soviet Union, at least in terms of numbers of problems. Besides the Panamanians, there were the people living in the Canal Zone, the so-called Zonians. The Panama Canal Company was a corporation with just one stockholder and it was the U.S. Secretary of the Army. The governor of the Canal Zone was always a major general from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Canal Company had what I thought, from the beginning, was a very unfortunate hiring policy; that is to say they would not place Panamanians in any professional position above the level of GS-7 or 8, for supposedly security reasons. So they hired- (end of tape)

Q: We were saying the Canal Company hired locally. They would hire Americans for professional positions in the Canal Zone locally.

BRIDGES: This meant that they were creating a race of people, the Zonians, who were permanent residents of the Isthmus although they had American passports; many of them were part Panamanian, ethnically because their fathers or grandfathers had some Panamanian in them. And because the Canal Company hired locally, there were many American employees in the Zone who were third generation Zonians. They were real colonials, and they often had the support of Members of Congress. The Panamanians were very bitter about U.S. policies in and on the canal, and on the other side you had the Zonians who were bitter because they didn’t always get the treatment they wanted.

Q: Socially how did you and your wife fit in?

BRIDGES: After the demonstrations against the Canal on November third of 1959, the Panamanian national holiday, things got very different. It seemed that almost all Panamanians, no matter what their politics, no matter what their economic status, no matter what their ethnic-racial background, almost every Panamanian was anti-gringo. They all thought the United States was in the wrong, Let me get to the question that led to

the 1959 riots. The US-Panamanian treaty of 1903, which established the Canal Zone, said that in the Canal Zone the United States should enjoy all the rights and privileges it would if it were sovereign there. And so from the United States point of view, we had sovereign rights in the Canal Zone. But the Panamanians said, "No you're not sovereign, because the treaty says *if you were sovereign;* that means you're not." So we argued over this interminably, and one of the things the Canal Company was adamant about was that the Panamanian flag should not fly in the Canal Zone. And on November third 1959, Aquilino Boyd and a professor named Ernesto Castillero Pimentel led a group into the Canal Zone, to plant little Panamanian flags. Eventually the United States agreed that one Panamanian flag could fly in the Zone. We felt quite a difference in the situation after that, and by late 1960 we were quite happy in Panama. A very complicated country; ethnically as well as otherwise; there was a fascinating mix of people, not just people of Spanish origin but many with African blood, three groups of native Americans, and many people from India, from China, and indeed from the U.S.

Q: Did you find sort of a younger group there?

BRIDGES: Yes, quite a few. One, Carlos Arosemena Arias, was a young lawyer, and he and his wife were good friends with my wife and me. He worked for the most prestigious law firm in town, which had been started by a foreign minister. The last news I heard of him was not too many years ago, when somebody from the Financial Times tried to trace the funds that had been stolen from the Banco Ambrosiano in Italy. Something like two billion dollars had vanished. And the head of the bank had been found dead, hanging from the Blackfriars Bridge in London. Anyway, the Financial Times traced two billion dollars to two post office boxes in Panama, which belonged to a company represented by Carlos Arosemena Arias.

Q: Was there sort of a cavern between the embassy officers and the Zonians? How did that work?

BRIDGES: There was a divide between the embassy and Zonians, but the embassy of course worked closely with Canal Company officials. The secretary of the Canal Zone government was a man named Paul Runnestrand, and he and I were good friends. There was a U.S. federal court in the Canal Zone. That was one of the things Panamanians complained about; they said we had no treaty right to have a federal court. The judge was a man named Crowe, and he too he was a good friend. So we had friends in the Canal Zone, but by and large I would say the Zonians were disgusted with our embassy because they didn't think the embassy stood up for them the way they should, and indeed we didn't. Not always.

Q: Were you feeling any repercussions at that point?

BRIDGES: Yes, Margot Fonteyn, the British ballerina, was married to a man named Roberto Arias who came from a well-to-do family in Panama. He paid to have a kind of mini-invasion of Panama by one or two old landing crafts; God knows what was in his

mind. They caught everybody that landed, maybe a hundred men, and Arias took refuge in a foreign embassy and eventually got out of the country. It was kind of kid stuff. The saddest thing I remember must have been taken place in 1960, when the Cuban Revolution was new; it had been a year since Castro took over his country. A group of high school students in Santiago, the capital of Veraguas, a province lying between the Canal Zone and the Costa Rican border, were very much taken by the Cuban revolution. There was a lot of injustice in Veraguas, and so the kids gathered up all the guns they could find, probably their fathers' hunting rifles, went up into the sierra, which is not very high, and sent a message down to Santiago, saying "We're declaring the Panamanian revolution." I don't know how many kids there were, maybe a hundred. Well, the Guardia Nacional, the combined military-police force, sent a couple of companies up into the hills and basically slaughtered all these poor kids. It made an impression on me; it was so hopeless, there was a lot of injustice in Veraguas but these kids didn't have a clue as to how to promote reform. But they were influenced by Fidel.

Q: How about the American military? Did you get involved one way or another with them?

BRIDGES: We got to know some military officers, and we joined the officers' club at Fort Amador, and went swimming there pretty much every day. There was not a very heavy American military presence there. In World War II we had practically occupied the Isthmus of Panama; I think we had probably a hundred thousand troops stationed along the coast of Panama. But after the war the sixteen inch guns were decommissioned and shipped off and melted down, and the naval force we had in Panama by the time I was there amounted to just one minesweeper at each end of the canal. There were no combat aircraft in the Canal Zone. When we were still there they decided to send an Army battle group into the Canal Zone. Until that, there were no combat troops.

The minesweeper on the Caribbean side came in very handy when I was called on by a group from Nombre de Dios, a poor little town; this was when I was vice consul in charge of the consulate at Colon. The group from Nombre de Dios, about forty miles from the coast, came to call on me to ask for help. Back in the early 1900s, when the Americans were building the canal, they'd gone down the coast and found that the mouth of the river by Nombre de Dios had the best sand they could find, and dredged up tons of it for mixing to make concrete for the locks on the Caribbean side of the canal. Over the years the river had silted in. These were the years that we were proclaiming an Alliance for Progress in Latin America. "Alliance for Progress," my visitors said, "if you could just bring your big canal dredge down the coast and dredge out our river again, that would be good for your public relations and it would be awfully good for us and our fishing boats." I told the ambassador that it would be fun to go down and take a look; there was no road but I did know the commander of the minesweeper and maybe we could take the minesweeper. He said, "Sure." The commander said, "Well, I'd love to do it but you've got to talk to my admiral." So the ambassador talked to the admiral and we took a ride down the coast to Nombre de Dios, and it was a fascinating trip. I wrote a somewhat fictional account of the trip in a piece I did many years ago for the Foreign Service

Journal. But the Canal Company never agreed to send their dredge down the coast.

Q: Was the canal operating pretty well at this time?

BRIDGES: I think it operated very efficiently. At that time the Atomic Energy Commission was still talking about peaceful uses of atomic energy, and still saying that we could build a new canal with nuclear explosions. Thank God that never happened, I don't know what it would have done to the earth but anyway they were still talking about that. The size of the canal locks was a limiting factor and still is because they are one hundred and ten feet wide, and even at the end of World War II we were building carriers that were too wide to go through the Panama Canal. Work had begun on a third series of locks during the war but that was never completed. Anyway, the canal was well run. I sometimes wonder how well it's run now by the Panamanians; I see no information on that at all.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop.

BRIDGES: I have one thing about the canal, though. I had a friend in the Atlantic division of the Canal Company. I told him one day about my Russian expertise, and he said, "You know, a certain number of Soviet freighters come through the canal, mostly carrying cargo out of Cuba to the Soviet Far East. We always put Marines aboard, as well as Canal Company sailors to handle the ship through the locks, and of course there is a Canal Company pilot". In the Panama Canal, unlike other bodies of water, the pilot has absolute control. He gives the orders to the captain. So, my friend said, "At some point when a Soviet ship comes through we might need an interpreter, would you like to go through the canal on a Soviet freighter?" And I said, "Oh, boy, yeah." And I did one time, and it was a lot of fun going from the Caribbean to the Pacific on the bridge of a Soviet freighter.

Q: Were you at all tempted to stay in the ARA bureau?

BRIDGES: My immediate interest was in going to Moscow. Certainly my wife and I were open in those years to another post in Latin America, but I think I got less interested as the years went on and we got into another Latin country instead, which was Italy. So we never went back to Latin America.

Q: Well we'll stop at this point. So we'll pick this up in 1961 when you went to Germany.

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Today is the 30th of October, 2003. Peter, you wanted to add something about Panama.

BRIDGES: I was going to say I published a number of articles of my experiences in one place or another and I published one about Panama which was called On the Isthmus, a Young American in the Panama Embassy 1959-1961. That came out in the U.S.-U.K.

journal Diplomacy and Statecraft, in July 1998, and since then it has been republished in the electronic journal called American Diplomacy, along with a couple of other articles I had written.

Q: We're off to Oberammergau. You were there 1961 to '62? This is always a fascinating place. I wonder if you could tell about it other than the fact that you were concerned about getting crucified...

BRIDGES: We got there a year after the passion play; I might say that I've also included a chapter on my nine months at Oberammergau in a book, my first book, which mainly has to do with my experiences in Somalia, called Safirka: An American Envoy, which was published by the Kent State University Press in the year 2000. Anyway, there is a chapter about Oberammergau. At the time, the U.S. army unit there was called U.S. Army detachment 'R', for Russia. Two Foreign Service officers were sent there every year for a nine-month course. The course for Army officers was two years, and amounted to the last two years of a four year course for them. They spent a year studying the Russian language at the Army Language School in Monterey, and then a year at the Russian Institute - where I had studied - at Columbia University and then two years at Detachment R, after which they were destined for service in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, either embassy service in the liaison group to the group of Soviet forces in Eastern Germany. The liaison group was pretty tough duty. Anyway, I was very pleased to be selected as one of the two FSOs to go Oberammergau, where all the courses were given in the Russian language and the instructors were almost all ethnic Russians. There was one Latvian and one Chechen, but they were both quite fluent in Russian.

Q: From your perspective, what was the thrust of what you were getting?

BRIDGES: The course was designed mainly for military officers. There was at the time one naval officer there, two Marine officers, and also a number of civilians from the National Security Agency, who I think like us FSOs spent only one year there. The course was obviously pointed toward the Soviet military, but not too much, so that we were given instruction in the modern Soviet economy and modern Soviet politics and modern Soviet military, the secret police system, geography - there was a very good course on economic geography and there was a course on the Russian language given in the Russian language, and it was pretty tough. The instructor was an ethnic Russian who had lived all his life in Poland, his only experience with the Soviet Union came under the Germans when he went into the occupied part of the Soviet Union and he became a school inspector. That was the kind of guys who were teaching us, not necessarily very likeable; there were two former secret police officers, it was a gamut of people.

Q: Did you feel that you all were under the scrutiny of the KGB or anything like that?

BRIDGES: I don't remember how much discussion we had on the subject, but certainly we assumed that one or more of the staff members was still in touch with people in the Soviet Union, although I'm sure the Army had screened them as carefully as they could

before they hired them. Some of them had been working for the U.S. Army for ten or fifteen years.

Q: Were you getting a feeling that the Soviet Union has a system that works and going to work into the far future?

BRIDGES: I don't recall that anybody at Detachment R, and I don't recall that anyone at our embassy in Moscow or indeed in the western diplomatic corps there, had gone so far as to venture a guess as to how long the Soviet system might last. Certainly, one could see that the Soviet economic system was inefficient. It was ludicrously inefficient, but the Soviet police system was quite efficient. What was happening was that the big parts of the economy were being used to support the Soviet military and the Soviet police system. But as far as we could see that system was going to remain in effect for a very long time to come.

Q: Was there any talk about the ethnic divisions within the Soviet Union?

BRIDGES: At Oberammergau, yes. I mentioned one of the instructors was Chechen, a man named Avtorkhanov who had grown up as a young intellectual under the Soviets and had been sent to Moscow to study. The Soviets realized that they needed more trained intellectuals from various non-Slavic nationalities. They set up something called the Institute of the Red Professorate in Moscow, and he went there, got a higher education and became a professor, and then went west when the Germans occupied Chechnya. He was very strong on the nationality problems inside the Soviet Union. I knew about this already from studies at Columbia; obviously Stalin had not solved everything by deporting the Chechens and Volga Germans during World War II; those people were still in the Soviet Union, and we all knew that the Balkan republics were not assimilated and that the Jews were persecuted. Nationalities were still a problem in many ways for the Soviet leadership.

Q: This is seven years after the 20th party congress when Khrushchev told all the secret speech. Was that something that was examined at the time? Looking beyond the veil...

BRIDGES: At Oberammergau, we were studying basics, going back some years into Soviet history, and we did not have a course there on the Soviet intelligentsia per se, although one or two professors were interested in the subject. There was an instructor named Krylov, who taught economics and economic geography but who would also talk sometimes about the intellectual scene. I knew a fair amount about that from my studies at Columbia. Certainly we knew that there was a lot of intellectual ferment, but I waited on getting to Moscow to really understand what was going on.

Q: How did you find working on the military with this? Was there a closeness?

BRIDGES: Oh, sure. There were I suppose about two dozen army officers and one Navy lieutenant and two Marine officers, and we were buddies; my wife and I were hikers and

skiers and skaters, and I don't remember if too many of the officers were skaters, but they were hikers and skiers so we did a lot of stuff together. A couple of them I still remember. One was a good hiking companion, Bill Dunkelberger, who returned to Oberammergau some years later as commandant of Detachment R. Captain, later Major Robert Bartos declared himself to be quite right-wing, and liked to make fun of the State Department, but we got along well.

Q: In '62, whither?

BRIDGES: In spring of 1962, we had a field trip; that was really the best part of the whole course. It was a four week trip to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union on a small bus. I mentioned this in my memoirs; it was a German touring bus, there were I think 12 army officer students, the Deputy Commandant who was an army major named William Thoma, and us two Foreign Service officers. The NSA officers were not permitted to go behind the curtain. We left Oberammergau and went to Vienna, then to Budapest. The Czechs wouldn't let us go to Prague, they were being more Catholic than the Pope, if you like. So we went through Slovakia, up to Krakow, Warsaw, and then into the Soviet Union; Minsk, Smolensk, Moscow, from Moscow to Leningrad and then back to Moscow and then we went south in our bus through Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, Kishinev. We went into Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and home again. It was a grand tour.

Q: I'm just thinking of the Soviets; why did they let you do it?

BRIDGES: I can't be sure; I don't know that we ever gave them reciprocity although perhaps we did. There may have been tours for Soviet military officers in this country, though I'm not aware of it. They certainly knew who we were, what we were, at each border. A representative of the local state tourist agency would get on the bus and stay with us throughout. So we had an Intourist man on the bus the whole two weeks we were in the Soviet Union. Our military were under strict orders not to make any observations for any sort of intelligence purposes. The commandant told the military officers, "If you go by a missile site, you don't make a note of it. Somebody else will take care of that; we don't want to jeopardize the whole system of trips. You are there simply to observe the general scene and learn about the country and countryside and not to report on military objects." As far as I know that's the way it went.

Q: Did the Russian military lay on any receptions for you?

BRIDGES: No, not at all. I don't know that our military officers were identified in their visa applications as military officers. I think they may have gone simply as students. Again, though, the Soviets knew who we were. We saw some interesting things. We told our Soviet Intourist guide that we wanted to see an educational institution, a collective farm, and I forget what else. We saw a number of things, mostly historical points, but then going south of Moscow we stopped in a smallish city and were taken into a secondary school. I think the students had some warning that a group of foreign visitors were coming but they didn't understand who we were except that we were Americans. It

was a grand morning, because each of us found ourselves surrounded by ten or fifteen Russian teenagers who wanted to know all about the United States. It got a little bit out of control, so we were loaded back on the bus; but it had really been quite a lot of fun. We were still lacking our collective farm and finally the last night we were to spend in Kishinev, or Chisinau, which was the capital of the Soviet Moldavian republic and is now the capital of Moldova; we came into Chisinau, and the local Intourist man got on the bus and said, "Gentlemen, I propose an hour's rest and then a visit to a collective farm." I think I wrote in my memoir that the collective farm was a very big one, and it was a grape-growing collective farm with several thousand hectares of vineyards. So we go up and down the vineyards, which is not too interesting and quite dusty and hot; it was May. We came back to the collective farm headquarters and found out there was a winery. So they said, "Now you will sample our product." We go down into the cool caves and there were these little girls with white aprons who came up with the specially shaped testing glasses and they told us that they made seven or eight different wines, white and red, plus a cognac. They filled our glasses to the brim. At this point Bill Thoma, our deputy commandant, noticed that the Russians and Moldavians were not drinking, and he said, "If you don't drink with us we're going back to town." And there was a discussion and finally the Russians shrugged their shoulders and said, "All right, we'll drink too." So we all got pretty drunk, and it was a good thing that we got drunk together, because otherwise I suspect the Soviets would have tried a little provocation. But we were all in the same state.

Q: How about your reception in Romania and Yugoslavia?

BRIDGES: Well, I don't remember a great amount about either country from that trip. As far as I recall, they were simply visits to tourist sites; In Romania we had lunch at Jasi after coming over the Soviet border, and our local guide told me proudly how he had invaded the Soviet Union as a Romanian army officer in World War II. We spent a day or two in Bucharest touring the usual sites, and the same in Sofia. In Yugoslavia we stopped in Belgrade and spent a night at Lake Bled. But again, we had only visits to tourist sites.

Q: This is more of a look than most people get of the Soviet Union. What was the initial impression you brought back with you?

BRIDGES: My main impression, as I recall, were that the Soviet cities were pretty much as I had expected them to be. The villages were much worse; I had not understood how heavy an effect collectivization had had on the Russian village. I had had hopes of seeing a beautiful sort of peasant village but in 1962 the Russian village was a muddy, desolate place. I remember we were in some village near Moscow and we stopped for gas and we were walking up and down, we must have been waiting for the bus to finish fueling, and walking through the muddy, unpaved street past all these unrepaired huts, all of a sudden, very low, a huge jet bomber takes off just over our heads. The juxtaposition of modern military technology and this awful mess on the ground was quite impressive, I still remember that.

Q: You got out of there in June?

BRIDGES: So I came back from my trip in June and then my family and I had home leave. We left for Moscow in September 1962.

Q: You were in Moscow from '62 to '64. When did you get to Moscow in 1962?

BRIDGES: It was in September, might have been September 10th.

Q: That's an important time. Before we get to the little problem between the United States and Soviet Union, what were you doing?

BRIDGES: Well, I was to be the assistant general services officer, which was certainly not the job I wanted; I wanted to be a political officer. But they said they just didn't have enough spaces for two of us who would be political officers; we were assigned to administrative jobs. I was assistant general services officer and Jack Perry was the personnel officer. So I was assistant GSO for a year, and not a terribly good one; certainly not an enthused one. The chief GSO was James Moran, who ended his career as a senior admin officer and then ambassador to the Seychelles. I did my job 40 hours a week, but after hours I read all I could in Soviet modern literature and culture because I was hoping that the second year I would get into the political section.

Q: How did the Cuban Missile Crisis hit you? What happened over there?

BRIDGES: I don't remember the first news we had, but of course we heard about it very quickly in October. It was worse. We understood the danger, but it was only two years later when we came back the United States, in 1964, that we understood for the first time how scared people had been in the United States. The difference was the media; the American media had been scaring the people, and of course the Soviet media was not scaring the Soviet people because there was no advantage to them doing so. Our mood was, I would say, one of concern. As assistant GSO I was not privy to all the communications to and from the Department, but the ambassador generally informed us as to what was going on. There were a couple of funny incidents. One Saturday, my wife and I - we were told to stay inside the compound, so that there wouldn't be some kind of provocation - I said to my wife, "Let's leave the kids with a sitter and go for a walk." So we went for a long walk through town and were coming back down the Garden Ring on which the embassy sat. About a mile short of the embassy, I said, "Look, there's no traffic on the Garden Ring," which is a very wide boulevard. We couldn't quite figure that out, but we got towards the embassy and we could see there was a crowd in the street outside the embassy. So we began to understand what was going on. I'd seen a real mob in Panama; this was a contrived mob. The Soviets had gotten together, I suppose, two or three hundred factory workers, God knows who they were, and made placards saying "Hands off Cuba" and "Down with Imperialism" and so forth and so on. The incensed demonstrators were standing in the streets holding up their placards but not doing anything, but they would occasionally be told to chant some slogan and so they would.

There was a line of sawhorses between the mob and the sidewalk and the people were all carefully behind the sawhorses. So Mary Jane and I walked up the sidewalk and looked at the so-called mob on the left, and the policemen. We walked into the embassy and at this point we found that the DCM had said staff should go to the upper floors just in case they started throwing rocks at the windows and things like that. We lived on the eighth floor, so we went upstairs, and soon enough - maybe they had been waiting for the two of us to get back inside - the demonstrators were given the signal and they threw some ink bottles and a few rocks at some windows and did some minor damage. But it was such a contrast between the real mob in Panama and these demonstrators.

Q: As assistant GSO didn't you feel like going out and saying, "For God's sake don't throw ink... "

BRIDGES: Well, we didn't see the ink as we walked past; they were not showing the bottles and we did send a note later to the foreign ministry demanding payment for the damages done. I don't recall that they paid us but anyway it kind of made me mad because I had to get all the stuff washed off.

Q: I was in Belgrade at the time. Our ambassador was George Kennan, and I recall some serious things, but I don't recall running for cover or anything...

BRIDGES: It was only in subsequent years that I understood how the American people were frightened to read of the exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Q: What were you picking up when you arrived at the embassy about Khrushchev?

BRIDGES: I can't remember too well, the early signals about Khrushchev. I can certainly remember what we were thinking and seeing in 1964. In '63 I finished my year in general services and I was assigned to the political section and was given what to me was the best job in the embassy. The political section was divided into an external and an internal side; the internal side was following developments inside the Soviet Union. There were three of us: head of the internal side was Kenneth Kerst who was a Civil Service officer from the Bureau of Intelligence Research who was given a Foreign Service Reserve commission and sent to Moscow for two years. So he was my boss. The second ranking officer in internal affairs was Bill Morgan, who has since retired, after a very good career later in the consular field. My job was to follow developments on the cultural side, developments in religion, developments in nationalities, and maybe a couple of other things. It was a great job, it was a hard job.

In 1963 there was a disastrous harvest in the Soviet Union. It didn't rain, they didn't have grain reserves. Khrushchev had foolishly embarked on a so-called virgin lands campaign, basically to plow up marginal pasture land, a lot of it in Kazakhstan, and grow grain. It worked for a year or two, I can't remember when he started the campaign, but in '63 they had a disastrously tiny harvest and it was after that they first decided they had to buy grain from the United States. Not a proud accomplishment for Khrushchev. We could also see

that Khrushchev was not liked much by the top Soviet military command. He was reducing the size of the Soviet armed forces, not drastically, but there were indications that the Soviet marshals and generals didn't like that. His cultural policy was sort of a mess, you might say. At the end of 1962 I was reading the Soviet literary journals when I stayed after hours when I was in General Services, and in late 1962 the journal Novyi Mir, or New World, which was the best known literary journal, published a novella called "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a totally unknown writer. That was a bomb going off in the Soviet intellectual world, that something like that could be published. Solzhenitsyn published a couple of other things after that, not so quite interesting as his account of labor camp life. There was all this ferment; and I got to know some interesting people in this field; for example a young writer, he was my age, born in 1932, named Vasily Aksyonov. He was the best known, best liked younger Soviet writer who could be published. There were a lot of writers in the Soviet Union who basically wrote, as they said, for the drawer, because what they wrote they couldn't publish.

Q: Was the Samizdat business going on?

BRIDGES: Well, it was going on but not to the extent that it was later in the '70s or '80s. Our ambassador had a deal with Hollywood where he could get new American films from the U.S.A. So he would have a film showing every month or two at his residence. And we all had to suggest interesting people he could invite, I was a reader, among other things, of a journal called Inostrannaya Literatura, foreign literature. I read two or three things in that by a writer named R. Orlova on American literature, and it was pretty straight criticism; it was not propaganda but it was pretty good stuff. So I suggested that we invite Orlova to a movie at the residence. I met her - her full name was Raisa Davydovna Orlova - and we had a good talk, and a month later we invited her to another movie, and she said, "I'm not going to come again unless you invite my husband." I said, "I didn't know you had a husband." She said, "Oh, yes, he is a literary critic, too, his field is German literature." So he came, and it turned out that they were willing to come to dinner occasionally at our apartment if the invitation was sent through the Union of Soviet Writers. His name was Lev Zalmanovich Kopelev. We got to know them fairly well, we'd have them over as often as we could, they were always talking about having us out to their dacha, but it never seemed feasible. We understood why they would not want to do that. We knew they were both Jewish, we knew that he had been an army officer in World War II, and had spent eight years in a Soviet labor camp starting soon after the end of the war. There were limits to what we knew about their lives; they both came from bourgeois families, they were certainly not proletarian by birth. It was only soon after I left the Soviet Union that I learned that it was Kopelev who had taken Solzhenitsyn's manuscript of Ivan Denisovich to the editor of Novyi Mir and urged him to get the approval for having it published. Kopelev had in fact been a fellow prisoner of Solzhenitsyn in a labor camp for several years, and in fact Kopelev appears in Solzhenitsyn's novel The First Circle. I can't think of his name in that novel. It's the one about the prison where they put scientists and the like. We decided that Kopelev and Orlova must have thought that since I was in American intelligence - but I was not - we

knew all about them. But we didn't. Anyway, they were interesting people; we were very pleased to have a chance to see them. Kopelev, later, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, wrote a very strong letter protesting the invasion. It was published in the Austrian communist newspaper. He was expelled from the Soviet writers' union and he and his wife emigrated to western Germany where later he got the big German literary prize; he has died since then. As I mentioned in something I wrote, I think my book Safrika, years later I read Orlova's memoir in which talked about how she had had to report to the KGB on their contacts with foreigners. I said in my book that I hoped that she had ended that practice by the time we knew them; but I doubt it, I'm sure they had to report on foreigners.

Q: This was the expected...

BRIDGES: Kopelev also wrote a memoir, Memoirs of a True Believer, and he describes very graphically his part as a young Communist in the collectivization drive in Ukraine in the 1930s, and how they were taking grain away from peasants who were obviously going to starve to death as a result. It was a very frank confession.

Q: So often in the Communist world the artistic side has been given a certain amount of freedom with regards to contacts and all that. I take it this was happening in a way. You had much better access to them then you would have if you were a political officer or some other part of the society.

BRIDGES: I have to say that these Soviet writers were brave people to be willing to have contact with such a person as me. I was sometimes surprised that I would get to see them. These were not the only writers or intellectuals that I saw. There was a young Russian named Andrei Amalrik who had been expelled from Moscow State University, and who had pretensions of being a writer. I got to know him and on Saturday mornings sometimes Mary Jane and I would pick him up and he would take us out to see an unorthodox artist or two. That was fun, and we would occasionally buy a painting for not very much. Again, there was a certain amount of bravery involved on these people's parts. The artists were not members of the official Union of Soviet Artists but they managed to make a living selling to foreigners. They were also selling to Soviet scientists. Soviet scientists were to some extent patrons of unofficial art in the Soviet Union.

Q: How about poetry? Was poetry a strong element in the literary or intellectual field?

BRIDGES: Oh, yes, very much. These were the days in which a young Yevgeny Yevtushenko was reaching his heights; I knew him, though not well, he came to dinner one time. He asked me if I was an intelligence agent and I said, "No", and I then asked him if he was, and he said, "No", and we went on from there. His nickname among the liberal Soviet intellectuals was Zhenya Gapon, which takes a little bit of explaining. Father Gapon was an Orthodox priest who was also a police agent, and who in 1905 led a mob of demonstrators to the Winter Palace, where they got mowed down. And Zhenya was the nickname for Yevgeny. So his nickname suggested he was in cahoots with the

police.

Q: Did you sense in the intellectual community that you were dealing with a strong Jewish element?

BRIDGES: The Jews had been purged after World War II, they'd been hit very hard in the late years of Stalinism. There were still a lot of Jewish writers and artists. Aksyonov was half Jewish; his mother was Yevgenia Ginzberg, and her memoir of the purges and labor camp was smuggled out and first published in Italy in the late 1960s. One of the artists we went to see was a man named Oskar Rabin, who was half-Jewish and who emigrated later to France. There was a lot of official anti-Semitism. The people at the top of the official Writers' Union were all ethnic Russians and not Jews as far as I can remember.

Q: Was the writers' union... was there sort of a Stalin apparatchik top level...

BRIDGES: There sort of was. I can't tell you that I got to know a gamut of Soviet writers, I got to know quite a few of them and some of them were old Stalinists; I remember surprising one of them, I can't remember who but in writing my masters at Columbia I had read probably a hundred post-war Soviet novels. Once or twice I would surprise these old Stalinist hacks who were still around by saying, "Oh, yes, I read your Red Star in the East." And he'd say, "My God, you did?" I'm forgetting to say that the most fun I had as a political officer was when John Steinbeck came to the Soviet Union in October 1963. I had not long before then entered the political section. Steinbeck agreed to the suggestion of Leslie Brady, to pay a visit to the Soviet Union; he had not been there since soon after World War II when he had gone there with Robert Capa, the photographer, and they had done a book about Russia rebuilding. Steinbeck said that he would go if a younger writer would come too, so Edward Albee agreed to come and arrived a little bit after Steinbeck. Steinbeck said that he wanted somebody from the embassy who spoke Russian and could come along and keep him out of trouble, and that turned out to be me. So it was fun, and Steinbeck's wife Elaine, who died not long ago, came too, and Mary Jane traveled along with us when she could, she had not long before become manager of the embassy commissary. So she did some of the traveling but most of it was the Steinbecks, their Soviet Writers' Union interpreter, and me. Albee came, and his escort officer was William Luers, who had joined the embassy a year after I did. Anyway that gave me a number of additional insights into the Soviet intellectual world and a few more contacts.

Q: If I recall, Steinbeck was a big darling of the Soviets at one time. <u>The Grapes of Wrath</u> was representative of showing how awful things were.

BRIDGES: Sure. And before that the novel immediately before Grapes of Wrath had as a hero a union organizer in California who as I recall was a Communist. So the Soviets looked at him as sort of a progressive, and when he had gone to Moscow with Robert Capa in 1947, they produced a book that was very favorable to the Soviet Union, about Russia rebuilding after the ravages of World War II. That was in '48, now it's fifteen

years later; they didn't understand that Steinbeck's politics were certainly not left at this point, he was supporting the American effort in Vietnam very strongly, his son served there. He was a Democrat; he was a strong supporter of Kennedy and later LBJ. He was not the sort of progressive writer the Soviets hoped he would be. Frankly, though, before he came, I was a little bit dubious to what his politics might be; I had read this postwar book that he and Capa had done and I was worried that part of my travels with Steinbeck might be having to tell him that it's not the way you think it is, it's worse. But he was not at all deceived and we got on fine and he was great to travel with, and we stayed in contact for several years after that. He was very kind to me, and in fact he and Elaine very generously gave me the use of their Manhattan apartment for two months in the fall of 1965, when I was working at the United Nations.

Q: I read this story - I don't know if it's true or not, but at one point they were showing the movie The Grapes of Wrath to show how the poor people were, and people would say, "Look, they have a car." They had this old rickety truck in the movie.

BRIDGES: He had written the Moon is Down during World War II, basically about occupied Norway although the characters have Anglo names. The Soviets put that on as a play and took him to see it and he was mad as hell, because first of all they hadn't asked him about it, and secondly, at this point the Soviets weren't paying royalties. He did not need the money but he was angry that the Soviets did not agree to take part in and sign the International Copyright Convention, and he gave them a pretty hard time on the subject of royalties. Incidentally, the biography of Steinbeck called The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer by Jackson Benson has a lot about Steinbeck's 1963 Soviet visit.

When we got to Kiev, our Embassy phoned me to say that the Foreign Ministry had told them that I would not be permitted to travel onward to Tbilisi and Yerevan. I told Steinbeck, who wrote a paragraph saying that if they would not permit his friend and colleague Peter Bridges to travel, then he wouldn't travel, either. I said that that was flattering but he shouldn't do such a thing. He told me to send it to the right place in Moscow. I cabled the text to Smirnovsky, the head of the USA section in the Foreign Ministry, and the next day the Embassy called me again to say that for reasons they didn't quite understand, the Ministry had relented and said I could continue on the trip.

Q: What was your observation of the interchange between Steinbeck and Russian people he would meet?

BRIDGES: He got on fine, but the question was how to get away from the apparatchik element and see good writers. For example, when we went from Moscow to Kiev, John was to be the guest of the Ukrainian branch of the Union of Soviet Writers. He wanted to see some honest writers. There was one writer living in the Ukraine who had published a diary of his trip to the United States; it was well read, pretty frank. So he wanted to see him and we made that clear, and the two of them finally got together.. Then I told the Soviets that Steinbeck wanted to see a number of younger writers, and Steinbeck said, "Give them some names if you can." So I gave them some names. The head of the

Ukrainian writers' union finally put together a boat ride on the Dnieper river one afternoon, on somebody's big launch, together with some of the big-name Ukrainian writers. To their credit, they also produced about eight of the younger writers, who were almost completely cowed and wouldn't say very much. Finally Steinbeck said, "Well, you don't want to say too much to me, so I'll talk to you." So he talked to them for hours, and I think it must have been encouraging to them. I wondered later what happened to some of them; one was a young poet named Vingranovsky, and it was fun to meet him because he had starred in a recent Soviet film about World War II, though he wasn't a professional actor. Mary Jane and everybody agreed that he looked like my twin brother. Not too long ago I looked on the Internet to see if I could find him and I found that he had indeed he had been made, not many years since, after the fall of the Soviet regime, a member of the Ukrainian Academy. So he is still alive, and I hope well.

Q: What sort of things were you using as contacts? Was this a matter of sort of letting this group know that we cared or did we get anything from them, or what was the purpose of the visit?

BRIDGES: The purpose of the Steinbeck and Albee visit was cultural exchange, to put prominent American writers in touch with Soviet writers and try to promote the cause of liberalism in the Soviet intellectual field. They were limited, most of them, in what they could read and we could help them only a little on that. I should add that the United States Information Service had a marvelous Moscow chief named Rocky Staples, Eugene Staples, who had gotten an arrangement with U.S. publishers of paperback books. They would provide the USIA with copies of recent American paperbacks which were then shipped to the embassy in Moscow. I guess we had some thousands of copies of these paperbacks, so whenever we would go traveling I would always take an extra briefcase full of paperbacks, and on a train I would pull out a paperback and sometimes there was a fellow passenger who knew some English, and I would say, "Here, you can have this, I have another copy at home." I remember a particular trip I made to the Western Ukraine with an officer of the Australian embassy, and they took us to see the local branch of the writers' union in Chernovtsy. There were three local writers there: one was Ukrainian, one was Russian, and one was Jewish and his name was Melamud. And I said, "Mr. Melamud, I happen to have in my briefcase two or three books by the best American writer, whose name is Malamud." And he said, "Oh, with that name he must be my cousin." Anyway, I really made his day; I gave him three copies of Bernard Malamud's recent novels. So that was one thing we were doing, promoting cultural exchange in small ways on our own if we couldn't get a big writer to visit the Soviet Union. Secondly, we were reporting to the Department and Washington on what was going on in the Soviet intellectual world which had some relevance to the overall nature of the Soviet regime and governance in the Soviet Union.

Q: The Russians intellectual side seemed to play a much stronger role than it does in the United States. I somehow think of all these people sitting around drinking vodka around the kitchen table in deep conversation. Were there currents that we were able to pick up of concern about their society?

BRIDGES: Yeah, I won't exaggerate. I've never reviewed all the reports I did. I did some years ago put in a Freedom of Information request so I could get copies of the reporting I did during Steinbeck's visit. One of the interesting currents was in 1962 and '63, the Soviet unorthodox artists had been given some additional freedom. There was a sort of opening in culture, a writer like Solzhenitsyn got published and artists found that they could paint and sell things at work. Unorthodox artists; they were not socialist realists. There was an exhibition of contemporary Soviet painters at the Manege, the old riding hall just outside the wall of Kremlin. It seems that there were some right-wingers in the Soviet leadership who insisted that Khrushchev go see this exhibition; they expected that he would explode when he saw this stuff, and they were right. He made his famous artistic judgment, that the paintings looked like droppings from a donkey's tail, and then there was a crackdown; there was a limited crackdown on art, there was only one member of the Union of Soviet Artists who was expelled. His name was Kropovnitsky, and he was the father-in-law of Oscar Rabin, the artist whom we used to visit on Saturday.

Q: How about the movies? Were they pretty much, boy meets tractor, tractor and boy live happily ever after?

BRIDGES: Yes, with some exceptions. I didn't see all the new Soviet films but every now and then we went to the movies. There was one that was really fun, it was a comedy about a World Organization of Youth convention in Moscow; there really was such a convention around 1960, but the story of the film is that a gang of pickpockets gets together and decides to make hay while the sun shines during the congress. It was a genuinely funny movie about the Soviet underworld, which the Soviets in general didn't admit existed.

Q: In your travels did you ever have problems with the KGB?

BRIDGES: I was lucky; I wondered in fact why they didn't hit me when they might have. It was probably in 1963 or '64, Jack Perry who had been our personnel officer was now working on the external side of the political section, and I on the internal side. One day Jack told me that the cops were after Betsy, his wife, that they were following her everywhere and sometimes just a couple of feet behind her on the sidewalk. They were trying to cow her, but also we guessed that they had a theory that she was maybe an intelligence officer. And it was very unpleasant. So Jack at one point said, "Let's the two of us have lunch and then after lunch we'll go for a walk, and somebody will be after us, I'm sure, and then at a particular corner, you go left and I'll go right and we'll see which way the follower goes." And we did that, and the follower followed Jack. But in Moscow I was not often bothered, not always aware that somebody was on me. Traveling was much more onerous, and I've written a little about that too. I wrote an article called "May Days in Siberia," that was published in an anthology called Tales of the Foreign Service by the University of South Carolina press, I think in 1978. I mentioned there how the cops had been on me and my traveling companion. We tried to take a boat upstream to an island near the Chinese border and they simply kicked us off the boat which for once was

honesty on their part.

Q: Was this when they were having trouble on the Ussuri?

BRIDGES: Yes, there had been troubles in 1961 and '62 and this was in the spring of '63. I traveled to Siberia with an Australian colleague named Bill Morrison, who was then number-two in the Australian embassy in Moscow. He later left diplomacy for politics, and became Australian defense minister. Anyway, the Soviets were not about to let an Australian and an American diplomat go up to the Chinese border, but we thought, nothing ventured nothing gained. We went to the local Intourist office when we got to Khabarovsk, and asked what they could do for us. We said we wanted to go for a ride on the river. They told us that there was no traffic on the river, there was ice on the river. Well that was a lie, and we knew it. Maybe there was ice further north but not at Khabarovsk in May. So we walked down to the river and there was the boat station, and probably three or four of these passenger boats that were a hundred and fifty feet long. We knew that in Moscow you could go on a river boat and buy your ticket on board. We went to the ticket office, but the ticket window woman saw us coming and shut the window, so we just got on the boat. The sign indicated it was leaving soon to go somewhere upstream. The young mate came up and said, "You have your tickets?" And we said, "No, we'll buy them later", and he walked off. The conventional wisdom was that the KGB officer civilians wore green fedoras because the color for Interior Ministry troops was green on their uniforms. So the story was that KGB boys wore green fedoras. We had already seen a guy in such a fedora once or twice in town. Well anyway, we were on the boat, waiting to buy our tickets and up comes the guy with a green fedora with a colonel of the Soviet militia. And the colonel said, "Where do you think you're going?" And we say, "On a ride." He said, "You're not going anywhere. Get your asses off the boat." So we did, protesting, but at least he was honest because they were terrible liars, but this guy was straight and direct. So then we took a taxi out of town. The understanding was that in any city you could go up to 40 kilometers from the center, 25 miles. So we got in a taxi and said, "Take us down the road toward Vladivostok. We want to go to 38, 40 kilometers, when you get to that point, turn around." We got about ten kilometers, there was a fork in the road and there were two soldiers in the fork and they waved down the driver and walked up to him and said, "Show your documents", and he did. They didn't even look at us. And they said, "Go back to town, your brakes don't work." We were stymied; they wouldn't let us see anything. We wanted to see a factory, they said there was no factory, and we wanted to see the writers' union, there was none, no collective farm although we had seen some from the plane. So we finally left a day early and went back to Irkutsk.

Q: Did you get any feel for the nationalities' divisions?

BRIDGES: It was clear to me that the nations in the Caucasus - I got to Georgia and Armenia - that the Georgians were sort of doing their own thing, with limits, there was a strict police regime everywhere. But they were doing a sort of Georgian thing. There seemed to be a sort of permissiveness in Georgian culture that was permitted, as far as the

KGB permitted, probably in part because the top cultural people in Moscow in people didn't know Georgian. They maintained their individuality in many ways. Very few Georgians spoke Russian, in contrast with people in probably every other Soviet republic. Almost all Armenians, many Central Asians, most educated non-Russians, spoke fairly good Russian. People in the Baltic states spoke it well even though they didn't want to. But the Georgian census of around 1960 showed rather few people speaking Russian. The Baltic states certainly had not been absorbed the way the Soviets wanted to absorb them; the Latvians and Estonians still had, for example, national singing festivals every several years that were occasions for nationalistic expression.

Q: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were off limits to you?

BRIDGES: No, they were not; not entirely. I never got to Lithuania. I got to Latvia, but you could only visit the capital city, Riga. So I got to Riga once with Raymond Garthoff, who was later ambassador to Bulgaria. At the time he was an expert on the Soviet military - and probably still is. His wife was Latvian by origin. He was visiting Moscow, but he wanted to go to Riga to see it. I'd not been there, so we went and spent a weekend there. You had to fly to Riga, you weren't permitted to take the train. I visited Tallinn in Estonia, four times I think. You could not fly to Tallinn, but you could take the train from Leningrad. Every time I went to Tallinn I'd go into a café, which was a very un-Russian sort of establishment, they were European style café s, there were people sipping coffee and drinking their brandy. I think that any time I sat down in a café in Tallinn it took about five minutes until someone at the next table would tell me how much they hated the Russians and so forth and so on. Their sentiment was very strong.

Q: You left in 1964. Khrushchev was kicked out in '64?

BRIDGES: Yes, and I wrote in my book Safirka I published a sort of confession. The question, in August and September 1964 was whether Khrushchev was going to last. The Chinese were making fun of him and there were a lot of problems internally. The Soviet military had problems with him, the harvest, the economy was not working, the intellectual world was a problem. He had competition; he was not the strongest leader, he was not the leader that Stalin had been. It came to me to draft a telegram on whether Khrushchev was going to stay or go. I think my main argument was that the Soviets couldn't afford to get rid of him because of the Chinese, which is really not good argumentation. My draft went up the line to the counselor for political affairs and then to the DCM and to the ambassador, and when it was all agreed upon, the cable was sent. That was around Labor Day 1964. I left later in September, and probably in the beginning of October I was on home leave in Chicago and my brother-in-law came to town from New Orleans and asked me to come to lunch with him and his company's Chicago agent. We had a two martini lunch and I was probably into my second martini and lunch was coming when the public affairs system of this private club said, "Sorry to interrupt but the press is reporting that Nikita Khrushchev has been kicked out." I said, "Excuse me," and walked off. My brother-in-law told me years later that he and his agent had thought that I had gone off and telephoned Washington. Well, in fact I had gone to the men's room. It

was really not a very good time for the author of the telegram explaining why Khrushchev was not going to be kicked out should go and call the Department.

Q: Well, then where did you go?

BRIDGES: Back to Washington, where my orders said I was to spend four years. My first two years would be spent on detail to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Q: Before we move on, talk a little bit about your wife and living in Moscow with the family. How was that?

BRIDGES: As far as my wife was concerned, she is a very hardy type. The years we were there we had three young children. The oldest, our son, entered first grade there, the older of our two daughters started kindergarten there, and our youngest was not yet in kindergarten. So we had one, then two kids in the Anglo-American school, which was not a bad school, housed in what had once been the house of Kropotkin, the 19th century thinker. Most of the children came from western embassies; I suppose there were more Americans and British than anything. The second year we were there my wife managed the embassy commissary which was a fairly big enterprise, we depended heavily on the commissary for food. Its turnover was something around a million dollars a year, which in 1964 was big money. When we could, we'd get out and go west for a bit, especially in the summers. It was interesting in Moscow, though; there were a number of things to do. The year that Mary Jane was the commissary we decided we had to have an au pair. So in the summer of 1963 we went to western Germany on vacation, me for two or three weeks and then my wife and kids stayed for another month. She advertised in the Munich newspapers for an au pair. We initially hired a German woman who was probably about 40 years old and was working for the Siemens company and who basically thought she could take a leave of absence for a year; she really wanted to see the Soviet Union. But in the end she decided she would rather not do it; her name was Elizabeth von Rundstedt, and she was the niece of the field marshal. She was afraid that they might not receive her too well. So instead we hired a young Canadian girl who was 21 or 22 years old, who was making a living teaching English, and she was great fun; she was a very good skater so the children first learned to skate with her. And that was our winter sport, skating in the little rink behind the embassy and at Gorky Park. The park was great fun because they would spray all the sidewalks and there were three rinks in the park, too, so you could skate all over the place and they had speakers with waltz music and it was a great outlet. The Canadian left us, but for the last few months we were there we had a marvelous Danish girl working for us.

Q: So you're back in Washington and doing arms control. This would be '64?

BRIDGES: I came back in September 1964 and had some home leave, so I must have gone to work in October. I was in disarmament for two years but they tricked me; when I reported for work I learned that their intention was to transfer us out to the U.S. mission in Geneva, the site of the disarmament conference. But for the time being the Soviets had

stopped their participation in the conference, and nothing much was going on. So they were going to wait to transfer us to Geneva until the Soviets decided to resume the talks. Meanwhile, we had been transferred not on a temporary but a permanent basis to Washington, and after 30 days our temporary lodging allowance ran out and we stayed on in a little apartment-hotel in Rock Creek spending a lot of money I wasn't making, basically using up all the savings from Mary Jane's salary in the Moscow commissary. It was very distressing, so we bought a row house on Cathedral Avenue, very close to Rock Creek Park with all our savings, being pretty sure that once we did that they would transfer us to Geneva. But they never did. Things were very dull at work, so dull I thought that maybe I'd find myself another assignment. I had a friend named Margaret Beshore who had been vice consul in Panama when I was vice consul in Panama. She was now an assistant to Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps. So I went to see Margaret and said, "Do you have anything interesting for me in the Peace Corps?" And she said, "Let me look around." Soon she said, "Would you like to be desk officer for the Southern Cone in South America?" And I said, "Yup." And one day I went to see Sargent Shriver and he said, "Okay," and we shook hands. The next week, disarmament came alive and I decided not to go to the Peace Corps. The Soviets still said that they wouldn't for now agree to resume the Geneva disarmament conference; their stated concern was that the developing world was not taking part in the conference. But the compromise for the moment was to have a meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which was a committee of the whole of the U.N. General Assembly. I went to New York for that in early 1965, and after that we came to an agreement with the Soviet Union to expand the membership of the Geneva conference. It had been five Warsaw Pact governments and five NATO governments, with the two co-chairmen being the Soviets and the Americans. The agreement was to expand it by eight non-aligned countries; so it now became a conference of eighteen, which was so large that it was a perfect guarantee that nothing serious would be done in the conference. The new eighteen nation disarmament conference began to meet in 1965 and I was sent to Geneva, on temporary duty. So from '65 to '66 I was not much at home. I was in Geneva, in New York, and then back in Geneva. I had to get out of there; I had a wife and three kids in Washington and was seeing very little of them, and they would not assign us all to Geneva.

The only real talks between the Soviets and Americans on disarmament were in the guise of private talks between the co-chairmen of the conference, who it was understood should meet regularly to discuss the work of the conference. So the negotiating that was done was done in the talks between the Soviet and American chairmen in Geneva. Of course each side had an interpreter; the Soviets always had a trained younger officer as interpreter. Our interpreter was Alex Akalovsky, who was an FSO of Russian origin who had started out as a Russian-English interpreter in the State Department. He had become a very good substantive officer on disarmament.

Anyway, this is the summer of 1965, probably August. I saw Alex Akalovsky and his wife and kids off on the train at Geneva, on their way to Moscow where he was to be first secretary in the political section. I then became the interpreter in the private talks between the United States and Soviet delegation heads in the 18-nation disarmament conference. I

had gone to Language Services in the Department and been tested on my Russian, and they had given me a letter saying that I was proficient enough as a Russian-English interpreter, although I think there was some guarded language in there making it clear that I was not God's gift to the interpreting world, which I certainly was not. But I felt confident that I could do the job, the disarmament lingo after all was heavy on a number of phrases and words that you got to know and my Russian was pretty good. The head of the Russian service of the Voice of America at that time was Terence Catherman, whom I had known in the embassy at Moscow. He asked me if I would like to come down to VOA and read a script every now and then for the Russian service. He wanted to do it because all of the announcing staff at the time in the Russian service were emigrés, and they had a vocabulary and accent that was not exactly Soviet. The Voice was always accused by the Soviets of being nothing but a voice of poor emigrés. So he was looking for a younger American whose Russian accent was, if not perfect, pretty good. So I'd go down on Sunday mornings sometimes and read the news to the Soviet listening public. So my Russian, again, was not bad.

But this interpreting job was awful; it was probably the hardest job I ever had, because I couldn't do the easier thing which was to interpret from Russian to English. I had to interpret what my delegation said in English into Russian, and it's harder to interpret from your own language. Fortunately the young Soviet interpreter would help me when he could. The usual head of our delegation was the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, a retired Republican business executive named William Foster, a very fine man. Sometimes the delegation would be headed by his deputy Adrian Fisher, who had been the legal advisor of the department and later was dean of the Georgetown University Law School and also the George Mason Law School. Mr. Fisher was the son of a congressman from Tennessee, and he had a Tennessee accent and he liked to tell stories, and he liked to tell Mr. Dooley stories the most, from the old collection of books written around 1900 by Finley Peter Dunne about this Chicago Irish guy named Dooley who had a thick Irish accent. And at some point the Soviet interpreter came whispering to me, "What language is Mr. Fisher speaking?" Translating Mr. Dooley into Russian was not easy and anyway it was a taxing job but interesting. But the problem was that I was still away from my wife and kids and I had to get out of there. Fortunately my two year term was coming to and end. I discovered Mr. Foster, the head of the agency, didn't want to lose me. So I said, "I've got to get out, Mr. Foster." And he said, "Well. if you really have a new assignment waiting for you and if you've got a good replacement coming in behind you, I won't object." So I went to Personnel and said, "Hey, there's this great job for a Soviet hand." Nobody was interested until finally I found a colleague who had been in the embassy in Moscow with me, whose Russian test results sounded pretty good, and he took the job. I think his Russian turned out to be not so good, but anyway I was out of there. As to where I was to go, I had discovered that the embassy in Sofia needed a political officer the next year, 1966. So I put in for that, and I was to have nine months of Bulgarian language training starting in '66 and I was to go to Sofia in '67. That was all arranged, I was feeling pretty good because I would have not too hard a year at the Foreign Service Institute, and come home every evening to see my wife and kids.

Then a friend of mine named Joseph Norbury called. Joe and I had also been together in Moscow; he had been a political officer. He said he needed to talk to me about something and wanted my advice. So he rode his bike over one evening after dinner and said that he was about to get reassigned, who knows where, and Personnel told him he could take a job in Rome (they wanted a Soviet hand to follow the Italian political left), or he could go to Montevideo. So what did I think he ought to do? And I said, "Joe, if it were me, I would opt for Rome." He said, "Well, thanks very much, but I've been to Europe and I've never been to South America, so I think I'll go to Montevideo." So maybe a week later I heard he was being assigned to Montevideo and maybe a few days after that I ran into Bill Luers, my old Soviet colleague, in the hall. And he said, "Hey, have you heard, there's this good job in Rome that's going begging." And I said, "Yeah, why don't you take it?" He had been in Moscow, and in Naples as a vice consul, and he spoke Italian. He said, "I put in for it, but Personnel says I can't go because I have to been in the Department for at least two years and I've been back a year. Why don't you go?" And I said, "I can't." "Why not?" "I'm going into Bulgarian language training." "You're what?" And all of a sudden a sort of light went on in my mind, and I thought, hmm. So I went to see Malcolm Toon, whom I had worked for in Moscow and who was now deputy assistant secretary in the European bureau concerned with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. And basically I said, "Mac, as you know I'm going to Sofia but if the needs of the Service should dictate, I want you to know I'm prepared to go to Rome." He said, "I see." And the Bridges went to Rome.

Q: You were in Rome from when to when?

BRIDGES: I was assigned to Rome for four years as a political officer and started in 1966. But in the end the ambassador asked me if I would stay a fifth year, so I stayed until 1971, and in 1971 he asked me if I would like to stay one more year. So I was going to stay a total of six years, which probably was going to cause a number of people in the Service and Department to wonder whether I was serious about life. I was.

Q: You went to Rome in '66. What was your job?

BRIDGES: I became a political officer in the political section. The basic job was to follow the Italian far left, mainly the Italian Communist party with whom we had no personal contacts. I was also given the Liberal party, a small party which was at the time in the government coalition, so I could make contact with at least some politicians. I went there with no Italian at all. I spoke good Spanish; I had been tested at four-plus, five-minus in Spanish which is pretty good. So I thought to myself I could convert my Spanish into Italian, and every morning at seven or seven-thirty I would have an hour of Italian tutoring. But it was hard. Not many months ago I had a letter from Ralph Ribble. He had been the administrative officer in the embassy in Panama when I was there. When I got to Rome I found that he was the counselor for administrative affairs in Rome. So we were friends, but it was only several months ago that he told me that when Frank Meloy, the deputy chief of mission, heard that I was being assigned to the political section in Rome he had expressed his concern to Ribble, saying he was afraid that my Italian was probably

not very good. And Ribble told him that he remembered that I had spoken very good Spanish in Panama, so that Meloy agreed with Ribble that he would give me six months, and if I didn't shape up after six months Ribble agreed that he would find me another job. Well, what neither of them knew was that not only was my Italian not very good, it was nonexistent. But I worked on it, and after six months I could speak a kind of Italian.

Q: The ambassador was who at the time?

BRIDGES: The ambassador to Italy at the time was George Frederick Reinhardt who had been there several years, whom I knew of basically by his having been a Soviet hand years before. He had been ambassador to Vietnam and then to Egypt before going to Rome.

Q: The embassy in Rome was a big one. How did you find it being there? It was quite different from the other places you had been.

BRIDGES: Well, it was quite different. We lived and worked in elegant surroundings; of course the chancery had once been the residence of the Queen Mother, in the 1920s. At that time, in the late 1960s, there were no particular security problems, so people came in and out of the embassy pretty freely; Italians would come and see us, and we'd go see people. It didn't take me very long to meet a lot of Italians and although I was somewhat circumscribed on whom I could make contact with in the political parties, I met a number of senior Italian journalists who had served in the Soviet Union. So we had that in common and these were all interesting men; intellectual, educated men, good journalists. I had half a dozen friends like that.

Then my wife hit the ground running. She started studying Italian, she had already learned Spanish. She would put the kids on the school bus every morning and she and the dog would go look for an apartment for us, since the real estate agencies in Italy at the time were not very well organized. Basically it meant looking for rental signs on the side of a building. Meanwhile, she got to know the city, she and the dog, by walking around in it. She decided it was a grand place and she liked it very much. So we soon felt good about the place. All three of the children were at the American community school, called the Overseas School of Rome. There was not too much of a school athletic program, but I found that the Italian National Olympic Committee, CONI, had this great system of athletic courses for children and good facilities which were financed by one of the state lotteries. So we put the kids in the CONI program, and since my wife was willing to devote her time to take them back and forth they spent their afternoons after school with Italian kids at the big sports center at Acqua Acetosa, where our son was in diving and the two little girls were in swimming. So they got all the exercise they needed and wanted.

Q: When you arrived there in '66, what sort of government did you have?

BRIDGES: It was a center-left government. The Christian Democrats and the Socialists had come to terms before ever I got there. Italy was in good economic shape. We had

been to Rome first in 1957 when I was an enlisted man in the Army in France. Mary Jane and I had taken the train to Rome because she was six or seven months pregnant, and we spent a week there. The differences between 1957 and 1966 were very considerable. Prosperity was already visible in 1957, but traffic was nonexistent in 1957 and was already a problem in '66. The Italians were still talking of themselves as a poor nation but it was very clear that the Italian economic miracle was a very considerable miracle and I soon decided it was in some ways equal to the accomplishments of postwar Germany. However, population and unemployment were still problems to the Italians. In the earlier postwar years the Southern Italians had migrated to the cities of the North. Now they were going to Northern Europe to work. I can remember discussing with the labor officer my bad dream that there would be a Europe-wide recession and a lot of people would be put out of work and in Northern Europe obviously the first to be put out of work would be the foreigners. So the Italian economy would have a double-whammy because a lot of Italians who were making money and had jobs out of the country would come floating back into the country with nothing to do and nowhere to go. Well, it didn't happen, thank God, but that to me in the late '60s seemed to me a bad possibility. They hadn't solved all of their economic problems even in the late '60s.

Q: Who was the head of the Communist party at that point and where did it stand on various issues?

BRIDGES: Palmiro Togliatti had died. By the time I left the head of the party was Enrico Berlinguer. I'm forgetting somebody in the middle. There is an interesting story about Togliatti and Fred Reinhardt which has never been published, which Ambassador Reinhardt's widow Solie told me some time ago. In 1966 and later, I was only a mid-grade officer in the embassy and Mary Jane was the wife of a mid-grade officer, and the ambassador and his wife were far above us so we didn't see too much of them. After the ambassador died Mary Jane and I and Solie Reinhardt became good friends. What Solie told me was that when Togliatti died in the Soviet Union, which was in 1964, the Soviet ambassador in Italy went off to bring back his body and he told the Italian press before he left that he was going to bring back Togliatti's remains and they were going to be buried in the Protestant cemetery in Rome. The Protestant cemetery is properly the non-Catholic cemetery; it's just inside the old Aurelian wall by the famous pyramid of Cestius. It's a beautiful place. Keats and Shelley and a lot of other notables including Mr. Reinhardt are buried there. Anyway, the founder of the Italian Communist party, Antonio Gramsci, had been buried there. He lies there probably because he had a Russian wife and it could be argued that she was Russian Orthodox, therefore non-Catholic, so therefore he qualified. Anyway when Fred Reinhardt heard that the Soviet ambassador was going to bring back Togliatti for burial in the Protestant cemetery, Mr. Reinhardt, who was the chairman of the ambassador's group that ran the cemetery, said, "No way." So the Soviet ambassador soon discovered that Togliatti was not going to be buried there. The Soviet ambassador asked to see Mr. Reinhardt, and Mr. Reinhardt unfortunately was too busy to see him for a while, but finally did so. So the ambassador came by and said that he wanted to discuss how Togliatti might be buried in the non-Catholic cemetery. Mr. Reinhardt explained there were problems but then said, "Actually, maybe the way to do it is to identify him as

not an Italian. I was at our Moscow embassy during World War II, and I remember very well that at some point the Soviet press reported that Togliatti had been given Soviet citizenship. So, all you have to do is give me a letter saying that Togliatti is a Soviet citizen, and we will get him buried the next day." And the next day he was buried in the main city cemetery.

Q: Well, Togliatti indicated that he came out of the old Stalinist system. There was the Italian Communist Party a real Stalinist Party or had were there any glimpses of Eurocommunism coming out?

BRIDGES: Oh, yes, indeed, I mean the Soviet Communist Party and the Italian Communist Party were very different creatures. One of the sad things was that the PCI, the Italian party, could not bring itself to be utterly critical of the Soviet Party, even when in 1956 the Soviet had crushed the Hungarian regime. Although there had been a lot of disquiet in the PCI and a number of people had resigned, all in all the party had not split from the Soviet party. As we knew, the Italian party was still receiving a subsidy from the Soviet party, which was totally unnecessary; the Italians were not without their own resources. Anyway, after I had been there for some time it became clear to me that if political processes in Italy continued in their present course for another decade, the Italian Communists were going to be in the government. It was going to be a center-left, far-left government.

Aldo Moro, who was the greatest of the Christian Democratic leaders, wanted to see this happen. And the Italians would argue that this was going to bring about the final break between the Italian party and the Soviet. Anyway I convinced my bosses that we had to get Washington to do something about this. My immediate chief, the deputy head of the political section, was Robert Barbour who later was ambassador to Suriname, and the political counselor, his boss, was Samuel Gammon who was later ambassador to Mauritius. I said to them, "Look, guys, this is my belief, the PCI is moving toward the government and we've got to do something." And Sam said, "Well, if we send a telegram to the Department on this, it will get over-distributed and will probably get to Capitol Hill and there will be a terrible reaction from some of the Italian-American Members of Congress." I thought it was necessary to establish contact with the Italian Communist Party. This had happened already in Paris, where my friend Jack Perry, my old Moscow comrade who had a job like mine in the Paris embassy, had been permitted to start having contacts with the French Communists. I was told to draft a "memorandum for discussion" to be sent to the Italian desk in the State Department. It basically said that we think that time has come to open a very narrow, informal channel of communication with the Italian party. And it was agreed; one American, one Italian, me the American. Who was the Italian? I had already identified the guy that I wanted to see. He had been the correspondent in Moscow of the Italian Communist newspaper, L'Unita, and was now working on the paper in Rome. He was well thought of, and certainly critical of the Soviet Union, and I knew that he gotten into some difficulties with his own people in the Italian party. His name was Giuseppe Boffa. So how did we make contact? I had a good friend in Louis Fleming, the correspondent of the Los Angeles Times in Rome. Lou

invited me to lunch and he also invited Giuseppe Boffa to lunch and the two of us met and I said to Boffa, "Maybe we could see each other occasionally." And so that was how all that started. I never revealed that until not too many years ago. Boffa, who later became a senator, wrote a memoir and mentioned me and explained how we had been in contact. So at that point I decided that I could go public too, and I did.

Q: What were we hoping to do? Just to keep a line open, or...

BRIDGES: To keep a line open, to make sure that these people were not self-deceived about the United States; we would explain to them in an authoritative voice what the truth was about American policy and what we were doing, not too easy a job since we were getting deeper and deeper into Vietnam. Not only the Communists but much of the Italian political spectrum was quite unhappy with what the U.S. was doing in Vietnam. Second, we would try to obtain what information we could about what was going on inside the party. Boffa would sometimes tell me things, not real party secrets. Third, to try if possible to nudge them a little bit farther away from the Soviet party. Again, Boffa himself had great misgivings about the Soviet Union but he never broke with the party. After I got to know him, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 and he criticized them very strongly. But he never got to the point of saying that the Soviets had been wrong in invading Hungary in 1956.

Q: Well, how did the Czechoslovak invasion go? Did the Communist Party come out with support for the Soviets?

BRIDGES: No, on the contrary. They were very critical of the invasion and in fact the Czechoslovak ambassador to Italy published something in L'Unita that was critical of Moscow, and I thought that it was going to be the end of him. But later when I served in Prague I found that he had come back to Prague and he had survived because of his good connections; he was a good old boy. But the Soviet invasion had a very deep, disheartening effect on the Italian Communist Party.

Q: You were there during the time of Berlinguer?

BRIDGES: Yes, I was. I never met him. They never tried to bury him in the Protestant cemetery, he was buried in the Rome municipal cemetery.

Q: Well, this is the beginning of Eurocommunism, which really scared us, Kissinger seeing it as a master plan which would put a friendlier face on Communism which would make it more powerful.

BRIDGES: Yes. If I can go back to Mr. Reinhardt, he resigned after a number of years as ambassador to Italy. He had a fine and honorable career which ended after President Johnson visited Rome. This was just before Christmas of 1968, when LBJ went to Vietnam, he wanted to visit his boys in the trenches. From Vietnam, instead of flying east he started flying west. The rumor was that he was going to stop in Rome to see his friend

the Pope. Yet we were not officially informed that he was going to do this. On a Saturday morning I was in the embassy, and Frank Meloy, the Deputy Chief of Mission, told me to go see the Chief of Protocol in the Foreign Ministry and request six sedans with drivers at six o'clock that evening at Ciampino, the military airport. And I did, and the Chief of Protocol asked me, "Is this the means the U.S. government is taking us to inform us that the President of the United States is arriving in Rome this evening?" And I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I don't have any instructions on that." And it was another hour before we were authorized to tell him. Well, the President wanted to see his friend the Pope. Fred Reinhardt very bravely made clear that the President, if he came to Rome, would absolutely have to call on the President of the Republic before he called on the Pope. The Italians were adamant on this; no foreign chief of state could see the Pope before he went to see the Italian head of state. This rubbed LBJ the wrong way, but in the end he agreed and it was done. He landed at the military airport and took a helicopter to the presidential estate where the President, Giuseppe Saragat, was waiting with his daughter and her children around a Christmas tree. At this point the Italians were not strong on Christmas trees, in fact Pope Paul VI had said that they were a pagan northern custom. But there they were, the two presidents, and it was a big scene on television; LBJ spent 15 minutes with Saragat and then took a helicopter to St. Peter's square and saw his friend the Pope. But Mr. Reinhardt's resignation was accepted soon after that. I think that Mrs. Reinhardt says it wasn't exactly a case of LBJ getting rid of him, but the general belief was that LBJ had done so, that he had simply taken up the letter of resignation that Mr. Reinhardt, like all other ambassadors, had had to give the President when he was appointed. He was then replaced by the former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, Gardner Ackley, who had been a Fulbright professor in Italy. Ackley stayed only about a year and then he was replaced by Graham Martin.

Q: So how long did you have Graham Martin under your...

BRIDGES: Graham Martin came, and I continued doing what I was doing. Mr. Martin was I would say kind to mid-grade junior officers. He was death, as I recall, on his deputies, and I think that had also been the case when he was ambassador to Thailand, which was his first ambassadorship. Frank Meloy was replaced as Deputy Chief of Mission by Wells Stabler, a marvelous officer, still alive, who was later ambassador to Spain. I don't know whether Wells will agree but my impression at the time was that Graham Martin was extremely hard on Wells Stabler, and without reason. But again, kind to me; he was the one who asked me to stay on for a fifth year then for a sixth year. However, Graham Martin knew next to nothing about Italy. He thought he knew something about leadership, and indeed he was a good leader in many ways. He had not been there too long when he became concerned about what was going on in Chile; these were the days of Allende. And our ambassador to Chile was very anti-Communist, very anti-Allende and began to feed our embassy in Rome with reports about the regime leading Chile farther to the left. This resonated with Mr. Martin, who could imagine Italy going farther to the left and becoming an Allende kind of semi-Communist state. The rest of us didn't think that was going to happen no matter how influential the Italian Communist Party became. It simply was not something the United States needed to worry

about.

At the same time Mr. Martin learned that there was a handful of high-ranking Italian military officers who thought that not only was Italy going too far left but that something might have to be done about it. There was a younger American businessman in Italy who knew one of these generals and he went to see Graham Martin and told him about this. Martin was a man with a kind of cleverness, not necessarily the same thing as being wise. So Graham Martin decided he had better get in touch with these generals and since he didn't utterly trust the CIA station, he asked the army attaché to get and stay in touch with them. Well, the army attaché was probably a good artillery officer but he was certainly not an intelligence officer. Sometime after I left to go to Prague, which was in November 1971, sometime in 1972 the whole story came out about the contacts that the American ambassador had been having with these generals who were known to be wondering whether the military should step in. It was quite a scandal.

Q: How did you view the Italian political scene? Everybody was worried about the Communist vote which was varied by three or four points in the election.

BRIDGES: Certainly the Christian Democratic leaders rotated through a session of jobs. Conventional wisdom in the U.S., which didn't know too much about Italy, was that the stupid Italians had a terrible government which fell every ten months". The fact was that after they fell, it was basically the same people who came back in. Now, there was a lot of corruption. It was clear to us that every party in Sicily, for example, had some sort of contact with the Mafia, including the Communists and Liberals who were supposedly the least corruptible of all. In the late '60s and '70s however, the Mafia was not the national problem that it became later. Corruption indeed was rampant. The Italians decided to build a complete new railroad between Rome and Florence, and I remember hearing that the minister of transport, who was a Social Democrat was getting two percent of the contract and since the contract was a couple of billion dollars, that was a sizable amount of cash.

The Italian economy was becoming a place where even a poor man or woman could find a decent job, but Italian politics was not keeping up with much of the rest of Italian society. I thought that it was a great tragedy that Italians couldn't think up a better far-left party, a better main opposition party than the Communists.

Q: I never quite understood why the Socialists just went down like a punctured balloon and didn't present a viable alternative.

BRIDGES: I don't either. But in any case the fact was that the main opposition was always the Communists, which I though was a terrible charge against the Italian nation. Why couldn't they devise a better Left that didn't have anything to do with the Soviet Union, Stalinism, with all that train of horrendous events? But they never did and history has a lot to do with it; people say that the Red Belt in central Italy, Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, became Red over a century ago because they were on the border of the Papal

States, they were the hotbed of agitation against papal tyranny and they simply stayed far-left for the next century.

Q: How did you find, at that time, the role of the CIA? Was it around? You were away fishing in their waters.

BRIDGES: The CIA was around, the CIA station in Rome at that time was certainly overstaffed. They were looking for things to do and it caused me some concern personally only at one point. Aside from my duties in the political section following the Italian left, I started out by being the contact with the officers in the political affairs directorate in the foreign ministry who were concerned with Italian relations with the Communist world. There were two offices; one was concerned with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the other was concerned with China. One day I was in the office of Luigi Vittorio Ferraris, who was the director of the Soviet and East European office, when the usher brought in a calling card and Ferraris looked at it and then at me and said, "This guy says he wants to see me, he's waiting outside, do you know who he is?" And I looked at the business card and it was Robert Boies, first secretary, American embassy, who I knew was a CIA officer. And I said, "Oh, yeah, there must be a mistake, you don't need to see him now. In any case I'll see him when I get back to the embassy, I didn't know he was coming." So I get back and say to Boies, "Jesus Christ, what is this?" Boies said he was not going to see Ferraris to talk about Italian foreign affairs; but Ferraris knew a lot of Soviet and East European diplomats, and Boies's job was to recruit them. And I said, "You know, this is really embarrassing", and I told the political counselor and the DCM and said to Boies that I hoped this sort of thing didn't happen again. Incidentally, I read a few months ago, in a book by an Italian academic that I found in Rome, that Boies had met several times with the professor, both before and after he retired, to tell him in detail what he had been up to in Italy.

There was also a book published in Italy in around 1976 called <u>The Americans in Italy</u> which was written or at least researched by an American but published in Italy. The author had managed to use the U.S. Freedom of Information Act to get just about every sort of paper out of the U.S. archives on the things we had been doing in post-war Italy around 1948, when we were concerned that the Communists might come out ahead in national elections. It's pretty detailed. I first heard about the book when I went with an AID team to Italy after the earthquakes in the northeast in 1976. We went to see the Vice Minister of Interior, who gave us a copy of the book. The head of our group, incidentally, was a USAID officer, Arturo Costantino, who was the son of an Italian diplomat and who spoke beautiful Italian. I was amazed by how much had been printed in the book about the CIA and U.S. subsidies to the Italian democratic parties in 1948. Again, that was '48. When I got to the embassy in 1966 I think that much less of that sort of stuff was still going on.

I enjoyed myself thoroughly in Rome. My Italian got quite good. I discovered that nobody in the embassy had been to Sardinia for a number of years, my boss agreed that I should go over there every now and then and talk to Sardinian politicians and leaders. So that

made the job more interesting. Then Sam Gammon, our political counselor, realized at some point that there were as many political officers in the embassy, seven, as there were consular posts in Italy. So he talked to the principal officers of the consular posts, and they all agreed that occasional visits by a political officer would be useful for them and so each of us was given a consular district to be in touch with, and mine was Florence. The political officer at the consulate in Florence was Dufour Woolfley, who is still a good friend of mine. So, every couple of months or so I would go to Florence and Dufour and I would go travel through the Red Belt talking to politicians. It was very useful for me to get of Rome and do these things, and I think it was helpful to Woolfley, too.

Another thing happened, and that is that two staff reductions were put through by the Department; one was called BALPA and the other was called OPRED. I forget which was first, but in any case the effect was to reduce the number of officers in our political section by a couple. After this, from being the liaison with two offices in the foreign ministry, I was given the job of liaison with all 12 offices in the political affairs directorate of the foreign ministry, which made for a very busy day, since in addition I was still reporting on the Italian Left.. It was a great assignment. After Sam Gammon left, Bob Barbour replaced him as the political counselor and I stepped up to become number two in the section. In my five years there I felt that I had made some progress and gotten to know and appreciate the country, and I think I maintained my objectivity and didn't fall victim to localitis, which is a frequent problem.

Q: Well then, in '71 you were off to Prague?

BRIDGES: Well, in 1970 I had spent four years in Rome. Our ambassador to Czechoslovakia was Malcolm Toon, whom I had worked for in Moscow and who had helped me get to Rome. I had been asked by Personnel at some point in 1969 if I would like to go as DCM to a small embassy in West Africa. And I said, I hoped politely, that I certainly would go where sent, but my idea was that since I had already been in the tropics, in part of the third world, in Panama, I would next like to go to someplace between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, that is to say I would like to go to Eastern Europe where, if I headed an embassy political section, I might have as much supervisory responsibility as the DCM in a tiny embassy in Africa. And they said, "Okay."

In 1969 I had a friend who had gone to work on the National Security Council staff, named Helmut Sonnenfeldt. I had known him since I was a cub on the Soviet desk and he was in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Hal had now gone to work for Henry Kissinger in the White House, and he asked me if I would like to come work for him. I had just been promoted to number two in the political section in Rome, my wife was six or seven months pregnant with our fourth child, and I was having a great time. I said to Hal that I would go if ordered, but I would just as soon not. Then, having been asked if instead of going to Africa I'd like to go to the White House, I had a letter from Dick Davies who had replaced Malcolm Toon as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Dick, whom I had also known in Moscow, wanted to know if I'd like to go back to Moscow and the job was number two in the economic-

commercial section. It looked to me like the officer I was going to replace was a CIA officer and I didn't know what the Soviets would think of that. More importantly, it didn't look like it would be a step up from what I was doing in Rome. So I wrote Dick Davies that I was aiming for a place in Eastern Europe, and I wrote to Malcolm Toon who was now ambassador in Prague, and said I knew that the head of the political-economic section in Prague was due out in 1970, and I would be delighted if I had a chance to replace him and work again for Toon. Mac Toon wrote back that he would be happy to have me but he didn't think an ambassador should choose any of his staff except for his deputy and his secretary. So he was going to leave it in the hands of Personnel. Personnel sent to Prague, to replace Mark Garrison, my friend and old Moscow comrade Sam Wise, who died several years ago. So I stayed on in Rome; Graham Martin asked me to stay on even longer.

Then one morning in November 1971 I got to work and was starting to look through the papers, and there was a little item reporting that the first secretary of the American embassy in Czechoslovakia, Samuel Wise, had been declared persona non grata. I cut out the clipping and went in to see Bob Barbour, who was my boss and who curiously had not gotten to work that morning as early as I had. So I just put the clipping in the middle of his desk and went back to my office. About ten minutes later Bob Barbour walked into my office and put the clipping down on my desk and said, "So?" And I said, "So." And he said, "So?" And I said, "So what?" And he said, "So do you want to go to Prague?" And I said, "My God, I hadn't thought of that!" And he said, "You hadn't though of that? You are stupid. Do you want to go?" And I said, "Let me call my wife." So I called Mary Jane. We had moved from an apartment in the middle of the old city after our fourth child was born, to a house in the country with a hectare of land and a swimming pool; it was lovely. But she didn't disagree. So I went back and told Bob Barbour, "Yes, I would like to go to Prague." Well, it was arranged. Sam Wise came to Rome and took my job and I went to Prague and took his. So just before Thanksgiving of 1971 I arrived in the embassy in Prague.

Q: Great. So we'll pick this up right after Thanksgiving '71 in Prague.

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Today is November 4, 2003. Peter, what was the state of relations between the U.S. and Czechoslovakia in 1971?

BRIDGES: It was bad; in some ways we seemed to have more prospects for improving relations with the Soviet Union than we did with Czechoslovakia. We would tell each other that it seemed we were punishing the Czechs for having been invaded by the Soviets in 1968. The leadership that the Soviets had installed after the Soviet invasion in 1968 was conformist, to say the least. Some of them were not much more than tools of the Soviet Union. There was not much trade between the U.S. and Czechoslovakia, something like 20 million dollars of U.S. exports. Our biggest export items were soy beans and soy meal for their poultry industry. There was also, between us, the problem of gold and claims. When the Wehrmacht moved into Prague in 1939 they confiscated

something like 18 tons of Czechoslovak state gold. At the end of World War II, we took that gold back from the Nazis. It was kept in London under tripartite custody; the British, French, and U.S. It had not been returned to the Czechs in 1948 when the Communists took over Czechoslovakia, and so the West still held onto this gold. After 1948 the Czechoslovaks in socializing industry and property, had confiscated a lot of U.S. properties, some of it belonging to individual families, some belonging to American corporations. The question was whether we could negotiate a deal whereby they would pay us what we wanted for our claims and we in turn would give them back the 18 tons of gold. We had negotiated similar agreements with other Communist countries including China by 1971, but not with the Czechs. Without a gold and claims settlement it was clear that we wouldn't normalize trade.

Q: Was there any particular reason why we couldn't get to that point with the Czechs?

BRIDGES: There was not much interest in Washington in doing much with the Czechs at the time. They were about as faithful an ally of the Soviet Union as you could find in Communist central and eastern Europe. Toward the end of my tour in Prague we did begin negotiations which were conducted by our Deputy Chief of Mission, Arthur Wortzel. He reached an agreement with the Czechoslovak government; it must have been just about November of 1974 when that agreement was submitted to the U.S. Senate for its approval. But the price of gold had leaped up and the Senate was not willing to approve an agreement that would give back the 18 tons of now much more valuable gold in return for a payoff of only 40% of the value of our claim. So it was some years after that before agreement was reached, and that was due to the skill of Rozanne Ridgway in the early 1980s.

Q: This gold was held jointly. Were the French and British willing to let go?

BRIDGES: The French were willing and the British later agreed, so we were the stumbling block. We remained the stumbling block; there had to be an agreement between the three parties to return it.

Q: You arrived there in '71 and you were there how long?

BRIDGES: I was there from the end of November 1971 until late June 1974.

Q: What was your job?

BRIDGES: I was the first secretary and chief of the political-economic section. The embassy in Prague was relatively small and compact and instead of separate political and economic sections we had one combined section that handled political reporting and representation and economic reporting and representation and commercial work, agricultural work, whatever scientific attaché work there was to do. It was a section composed of four officers, and they worked well. I insisted that all the officers in the section be flexible, that for example when there was more commercial work to be done,

the political officer should be a part-time commercial officer.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BRIDGES: By the time I arrived there Malcolm Toon had left, so there was a chargé d'affaires who was Arthur Wortzel. In March 1972 our new ambassador arrived and that was Albert Sherer, known to all as Bud, whom I had met in my first assignment on the Soviet desk when he was in that same office of Eastern European affairs as the officer in charge of Polish/Balkan affairs. He had more recently been first ambassador to Togo, then ambassador to Guinea, and then arrived in Prague in March 1972.

Q: On the political side what did you do?

BRIDGES: We tried to figure out what was going on in the political level in Czechoslovakia. The answer was not very much, although there were a few curious things. There was the case, for example, of Dubcek, who had been kidnaped and taken to Moscow after the Soviet invasion, and who was brought back only when the president of the republic, General Svoboda, said he would not deal with the Soviets until Dubcek and his colleagues were returned to the country. Dubcek had later been sent to Bratislava in Slovakia; he was a Slovak, and we knew he was now working at a low-level job, as the head of the motor pool in a Slovak ministry. We learned, however, that the Soviets were staying in touch with him, and all we could figure out is that the Soviets didn't really know what was going to happen in the future, and so they wanted to keep a line out to Dubcek, the head of the more or less possible reformers, just in case there was a need to deal with him at a higher level sometime.

Q: Had you talked to him?

BRIDGES: No, I don't think that he was willing to see anyone from a western embassy. But we knew people that knew him, I guess is the way to put it. The economic and commercial work was the more important work of what our section was doing. I had really no experience in that sort of work. The chief economic-commercial officer was Carl Schmidt. In the summer of 1972, after I had been in Prague for six months, Carl was transferred to Warsaw to be the head of the economic-commercial section there. He was replaced by Emmett Coxson, who had come into the Foreign Service with me in 1957. Emmett arrived in Prague with his wife and children and after he had been there for ten days, he said that he wanted to visit Brno, which was the site of the big Czechoslovak trade fair, which made good sense. He decided that he would take with him Kent Brown, who was our junior political officer. They drove there; I walked out of the embassy at six one morning to go running, and there they were getting into the car, to my surprise. I had thought they were going to fly. Emmett said that they had not been able to get air tickets so they were taking an embassy sedan to Brno and they would be back that evening. There was Emmett Coxson, Kent Brown, Emmett's 14 year old son, and our senior Foreign Service National employee, Jiri Frantal. They left for Brno but they never got back. It was raining on the way back and near Cesky Brod, not too far east of Prague,

Kent Brown was at the wheel when the car slid off the road and hit a fruit tree. Emmett was in the back seat, not wearing a seat belt, and was thrown against the roof of the car and was killed. His son was slightly hurt. Frantal and Brown both had broken bones; despite his injuries Frantal crawled up to the road, it was dark and raining, and he flagged down a car. Otherwise I don't think anyone would have seen them until dawn. So until Coxson could be replaced as economic-commercial officer, I was that among other things. When the replacement for Coxson arrived in December of 1972, and that was Bill Farrand, I knew a lot more about economic and commercial work than I had done, and I kept my hand in for the remainder of my tour.

Q: What sort of economic and commercial work was it?

BRIDGES: The biggest item that we were selling to the Czechs was agricultural: soybeans, soymeal. In 1972 there was quite a hike in the interest in the part of American industry in doing some sort of business with the Czechs. I remember we had on the wall a cartoon from the New Yorker that showed an American tycoon sitting in his office looking out his window at a line of smokestack chimneys, and he's saying, "Goddamn it, Caruthers, there must be something we can sell to the Commies." The fact was that not too many deals went through, but there were a number of trade missions that came to town interested in the possibility of doing business. Some months after Sherer arrived as ambassador, he said to me one day that he wasn't really overly busy. So I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, what if I could arrange some visits to Czechoslovak industrial enterprises. Would you like to do that?" He said, "Sure, but I don't think you'll be able to do it." So I said, "I'll try." I went to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and they said sure. The result was that Mr. Sherer and I visited half a dozen of the biggest non-military plants in the country: the steel mill at Kosice in Eastern Slovakia, the biggest steel mill at Ostrava, the Skoda automobile works, the Skoda engineering works in Plzen, a motorcycle factory, and one or two more that I can't offhand think of. But the results in terms of trade were very meager.

Q: On the economic point of view, were there remittances and pension checks?

BRIDGES: I don't know, I don't know that we ever measured it. There had been a block on Social Security remittances to pensioners in Czechoslovakia. I believe that had been taken off, but I don't recall ever seeing an overall figure about remittances from the U.S. to Czechoslovakia. This contrasted with the situation in Italy where we had a pretty good figure for the great amount of Social Security money going to pensioners there.

Q: What about contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

BRIDGES: The contacts we had with the Ministry were not too bad. I read several years ago an article written by a professor at Boston University, Igor Lukes, Czech by origin, who had been into the Czechoslovak archives of that period. I learned from his article that there was a certain degree of interest in the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry even in the Communist years in improving the relationship with the United States. It didn't surprise

me to learn that but on the other hand it was interesting to see it confirmed. The Ministry of Foreign Trade certainly wanted to see more bilateral trade, especially things that they needed like agricultural and industrial products. I remember doing a couple of reports for Washington on the economic relationship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. It was clear to me and the embassy that this was not a terribly satisfactory relationship. It had been more satisfactory perhaps in the 1950s when Communism was new in Czechoslovakia, at which point the Soviets were anxious to take any sort of industrial good that the East Europeans could produce because it was going to be better in quality than what they produced themselves. By the 1970s it wasn't that the quality of Soviet production was that much better, but they were finding it possible to trade with the West, especially with the Germans, French, British, Italians. So they no longer needed, say, Czechoslovak machine tools as much as they needed them in 1950, 20 years earlier. Conversely, the Soviet Union didn't have much to offer its trade partners except raw materials and they were sometimes short of those. At some time during my tour there we learned that the Soviet Union was telling countries like Czechoslovakia that if they wanted to increase their imports of Soviet iron ore they would have to invest in the Soviet mining industry, which the Czechs very much did not want to do. So there was a dissatisfaction inside COMECON and that left a theoretical possibility for the United States and other western countries, but it was not a possibility that really came to much at least in the early '70s.

Q: During this time was there any sign of what eventually became an important dissident movement in Czechoslovakia?

BRIDGES: That was the period, when I was there, when Vaclav Havel said many years later that history had stopped for the Czech nation. Charter '77, the dissident movement, took its name from the year 1977, and as I said I was there from 1971 to '74. I don't recall that we knew of any sort of organized dissident movement. I knew a couple of people who had survived the purges after the Soviet invasion. The best of these was a man named Miroslav Holub, who was a well known poet and microbiologist, who had spent some months in the United States on an exchange in 1967, and who had been one of the signers of a pro-Dubeck manifesto called the 2000 Words. He was still managing to survive as a microbiologist, but he was not signing any new documents and was not going out and starting any sort of dissident movement in the early 1970s. The situation was extremely bad. Holub had a rather attractive wife and they came to dinner with us a couple of times. One time, he came and said his wife would be late. He took a call from her later. He said that she said that she had locked herself out of her car; and she never showed up. Some time later the press reported that Holub had written a letter to the newspapers recanting and apologizing for his signature to the 2000 Words manifesto. The next time I saw him, at a reception at the British Embassy not too long before I left, I said something to the effect that I could understand the pressures that he must have been under to sign this recantation. He said, "I didn't sign it." I said, "What?" "No, I didn't write that letter and I didn't sign it." "How did it come about?" "Well, the curious thing was that when I read it I saw that it had to have been written by someone who knew me pretty intimately, because there were details in it that nobody else would know. I finally realized

that it was the work of my wife, who was collaborating with the police. I've left her." That just goes to show the situation.

Q: Was there a big Soviet military presence?

BRIDGES: The Soviets had I think two divisions plus other units in the country, but they kept them largely out of sight. There was a Soviet headquarters up near Prague Castle but you would never see more than one or two Soviet officers or enlisted men going in or out. One of the divisions, I think an armored division, was garrisoned north of Prague near Mlada Boleslav and on occasion the roads would be blocked off because they were out on maneuvers. But they were unpopular; they didn't want they didn't want to advertise their presence and they stayed out of sight. It was not a huge military presence but clearly, and the Czechs understood this, if they needed to they could get back in pretty quickly across the border. I think the only time I personally ran into Soviet soldiers was one summer Sunday when my family was in Italy, and I took a 30-kilometer hike through northern Bohemia. I stopped at the ruins of the castle of Bezdez, and walking around a wall I literally bumped into half a dozen Soviet soldiers, who presumably thought I was Czech. We said just a couple of words to each other.

Q: What about the relations between the Czechs and Hungary, East Germany, Poland and all?

BRIDGES: Well, again the economic side was not going too well in CEMA, COMECON. Take for example CEMA non-cooperation on the question of the official automobile. The second oldest automobile producer in Central Europe was Tatra in northern Moravia. The oldest was Daimler Benz; but the Czechs started producing automobiles in 1898. In the 1930s, with the help of a designer named Ferdinand Porsche, they designed a small streamlined car with a rear-mounted air-cooled engine which was called the Lidovy Vuz, which means People's Car. In other words it was the Czech version of the Volkswagen. Like the Volkswagen in Germany, they only produced a few and then the war came. After the war Tatra went back to the rear, air-cooled engine design and produced a much larger sedan and they continued producing these after the Communists came in, but only for official use. In the late 1960s they decided they would produce a bigger and better Tatra sedan for official use and they would sell it to their partners in CEMA. So they got an Italian designer to design them a very handsome car; it had an eight-cylinder rear air-cooled engine, a big powerful engine. They began to bring these things out around 1970, at which point they discovered that none of their Communist partners wanted to buy them. The Soviet Union produced its own sedan for top officials, the ZIL, the East Germans were probably buying the Mercedes, the Romanians were buying Citroens, the Bulgarians were buying Mercedes, so nobody wanted to buy their fine new Tatra, at which point they should have stopped making them but they nevertheless kept on producing around 150 to 200 cars a year.

Q: Did we have a chance to look at what the Czechs were producing? We went through this thing thinking that the East Germans were producing something equivalent to

something that would be produced in the West, but when the wall came down, this turned out to be untrue. How about with the Czechs?

BRIDGES: I remember talking to my counterpart in the British embassy, the first secretary. He was quite an expert on Czechoslovakia; he came out of the research office in the Foreign and Commonwealth office. And he said one day that Czechoslovakia reminded him a little bit of the United Kingdom not too many years since, that is to say an old, highly industrialized country that had seen better days but was still more or less living on its fat; that is sort of the way Czechoslovakia was in the early 1970s. It had been very highly industrialized even in the 1800s. When the Austro-Hungarian empire broke up in 1918, the usual figure is that two-thirds of the industry of the whole empire turned out to be in Bohemia. So the new Czechoslovakia from the start was an industrial country and I think in the 1930s was something like number eight in the world among industrialized countries. But the goods they were producing in the 1970s were not the equivalent of what was being produced in Western Europe or the United States or industrialized Asia.

Q: Did the secret police there harass you and other members of the embassy?

BRIDGES: They were more in evidence in Prague than they had been while I was in Moscow. The CIA station chief said at some point that they used the Western diplomatic corps in Prague as a training school for the young officers in the STB, which was State Security, the Czechoslovak KGB. And so sometimes we would be trailed by these young recruits who were learning how to do it. I was probably a suspicious character because once or twice a week I would get an embassy driver to drive me across the river into the old town and let me off at the Ministry of Foreign Trade, and then I would go on to two or three of the state owned foreign trading companies, everything was state owned, and that would last me until about lunch time. The driver would always ask me if he should pick me up at some point, and I would say, "No, I'll walk home to the embassy." After my last appointment I would take a route that would take me to two or three dealers in used books, which were sold cheaply and were sometimes very interesting. They had a store of old books in English and obviously after a while the STB thought I was leaving messages in books or picking up messages from somebody or the other. One time I saw in two consecutive bookstores, browsing next to me, a young woman with red hair. That was pretty obvious, but maybe they wanted to be obvious.

When we would travel through Slovakia the police were still more vigilant. I had a fun trip in the summer of 1972 with the chief of chancery of the British embassy, Stephen Barrett, and our 15 year old son, David. The defense attaché in our embassy had received a letter from a branch of the Anti-Fascist Fighters League, a Communist front organization, in a small village in Slovakia called Polomka. They wanted to inform us that they were putting up a monument at the place where the Anglo-American mission had stayed for a time after the Slovak national uprising had been put down in 1943. Well, we knew nothing about this mission but we knew something about the Slovak national uprising. While the German army was very much committed on the Russian front, the

Slovaks were enjoying a kind of autonomous existence within the Nazi area. Then non-Nazi Slovaks kicked out the pro-Nazi government and in the end the Wehrmacht had to divert a couple of divisions from the Russian front to put down the uprising. Meanwhile the OSS sent a mission in from Bari, Italy by B-17. Anyway we reported the letter to the Department of State, requesting that they tell us about this Anglo-American mission. About a month after that I got in the pouch one day a big envelope of formerly top secret documents that had just been de-classified, and it was all OSS stuff that told the story of this group that had been flown from Bari to Banska Bystrica in Slovakia. I think there were something like seven or eight men, and a lot of ammunition. Anyway the Wehrmacht moved in against the uprising, the U.S. team and the Slovaks fled to the mountains, and the U.S. team put up for the winter in a mountain hut above the village of Polomka. One of the members of the team was a Slovak-American who had been born in the village and they met up with a British team from the Special Operations Executive who had been doing something in Hungary. The day after Christmas in 1944 somebody ratted on them, and German troops surrounded the Americans and took them off to Mauthausen where they were shot. Two Americans escaped because they were spending the day with the British who were staying in a lodge a half mile away. They fled into the woods. Anyway we decided that we should go out and help the Slovaks celebrate the plaque they were putting up. So we went, and David our 15 year old came as the official photographer of our mission. We were very closely followed, especially after we got into Slovakia. We got to the village where we were met by the local State Forest chairman, and the guy that ran the local inn and several other notables. We walked up into the mountains and had a marvelous day.

The police stayed in town, they didn't want to walk up there, but there they were waiting for us when we came down and we had a lunch in the inn with the local people and then they followed us. My son and I and Stephen Barrett had decided that we were going to camp out on the way back so we had sleeping bags and a tent. I was driving an American embassy Ford, and there were two STB cars, Simcas, following us into western Slovakia toward the Czech Republic. I decided to give them a run for their money, and started doing 75 or 80 miles per hour down a two-lane curving road. The cars the STB were driving were holding on for dear life. And finally just before we got to the border one of the Simcas passed me, obviously just so he could show he could do it. We got over the border and there was no sign of them; we went several miles into Moravia on the Czech side and camped for the night in a field and we didn't see any sign of them.

Q: Had the town of Lidice been restored?

BRIDGES: No, there was a monument there but the village had never been rebuilt. In 1942 the Czechoslovak resistance movement had decided to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, who was the Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia. There was some disagreement about this in the Czechoslovak government in exile, which came out many years later. As I recall, Benes who was president didn't want Heydrich assassinated, for fear of retaliation. I believe it was the Czechoslovak military leadership in exile who insisted on parachuting two or three men into the country. They managed to shoot

Heydrich, who later died of an infection from his wounds. The Germans then totally obliterated Lidice. But they did more things too. We had friends in Prague, the husband worked in foreign trade, and the wife worked in the state-owned fashion industry. His father had been an executive at CKD, the big engineering works in Prague, and after the assassination of Heydrich and the obliteration of Lidice the SS walked into the CKD headquarters one day and pulled out four executives and took them away and shot them. My friend's father was one of the four who had been killed. So they retaliated in more ways than one.

Q: Where did the Czechs go to get away? Did they go to Yugoslavia?

BRIDGES: They went vacationing in Yugoslavia, it was relatively easy to do, or they would go to the seacoast in Romania or Bulgaria. Very few of them could come west; I don't think any of them could come to the U.S. although back in '67, '68 before the Soviet invasion some of them had been there.

Q: I think at this point we weren't seeing that there was any pick or wedge that we could drive between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union.

BRIDGES: No. We didn't think that the leadership in place was capable of undergoing a sea of change and becoming reformists. It would have required a revolution. The curious thing was that the Hungarians had been put down by the Soviets in '56. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying?

BRIDGES: I was saying that by the time I left Prague in 1974 it was almost six years after the Soviet invasion and if Hungary was an example, one would have thought that after six years the Czechs would be picking themselves up and pushing the envelope and starting to do some reform. But they were really not doing that, they kind of had their heads under their wings and were being very quiet and still. We had a friend named Jaroslav Zyka who was a professor and head of a department at Charles University, a scientist. We would see him and his wife sometimes, and I said, "How do you manage to keep your job at a time when so many professors and department heads have been purged?" He said, "Well, everybody has a file in this country. In 1967 and 1968 I was in Thailand on a fellowship. My wife and I were the only Czechs in Thailand, as far as I know; there was no Czechoslovak embassy in Bangkok. Everybody back in our country was for Dubcek until the Soviet invasion, and they talked about it fairly freely. We talked just between ourselves, and we talked to our Thai friends, but there was nobody to stick any of that into our police files. So I still survive." His wife told us that her brother worked in Washington and I found after we came back to the U.S. that he was in fact working for the U.S. Defense Department, which may or may not have been known to the STB, I never knew that. The Czechs were probably the most pro-American people that I had worked with. Their affection for the United States was very deep.

T.G. Masaryk, who is a man I much admire, had created Czechoslovakia in 1918 with the

support of the U.S. and Woodrow Wilson. Masaryk convinced Wilson he should support Czechoslovak independence after Wilson's 14 Points had initially called only for autonomy for the peoples of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Speaking of Czechs and Americans, let me mention an episode that happened, I think, in 1973. We were told by the Department that a group of U.S. Senators was coming to Prague. They would be the first Congressional delegation to visit Czechoslovakia since the Soviet invasion. I think there were three Senators, but I can only remember two; the head of the delegation was Richard Schweiker, a Republican from Pennsylvania, and another was Tom Eagleton, senator from Missouri and later a vice presidential candidate. The Czechs of course were very pleased that this high-level group was coming, because the U.S. had not been having any kind of contact with the Czechoslovak government, at least on the executive side. So we were told that the President of the Republic would like to receive the team. The President was a man named Ludvik Svoboda who had been an army officer; he had been in Russia during the First World War and had become one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak Legion which was created in Russia mainly from among prisoners of war, Czechs and Slovaks who had fled to the Russian side or had been captured by the Russians and who were very anti-Austrian, anti-German. The Czechoslovak Legion had to fight its way east to Siberia after the Bolshevik Revolution and eventually they made their way eastward across two oceans to Czechoslovakia. Anyway, we knew that Svoboda had been in the Legion. When World War II came and the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia, he had gone into the Soviet Union with other officers and spent the war there. When the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, he had stood up, as I mentioned earlier, to some extent, for Dubcek and other leaders whom the Soviets had kidnaped and taken to Moscow. That was in August 1968, and now, three or four years later, he had been under heavy Soviet pressure and was an old man who was not standing up to the Russians in any way.

Anyway, it was good news that the President would like to see our Senators. We briefed them before they went to see the President. I remember that Mr. Schweiker asked me if President Svoboda had ever been in the U.S. and I replied that I was pretty sure he never had. I tagged along with the group to go see the President. And I saw that sitting next to the President was Vasil Bilak, who was known to be the most pro-Soviet of all the pro-Soviet members in the Czechoslovak leadership. So I thought that was really bad news. T he conversation started very politely and after some minutes, Schweiker said to the President, “Mr. President, I understand you have never been to the United States.” The president says, “Let me tell you a story. I finally left Vladivostok on a freighter with other members of the Czechoslovak Legion, and we sailed through the Panama Canal and up to the port of Norfolk, in Virginia. When we got to Norfolk, the ship was sold out from under us, and we didn’t know how we were going to get home. But I had a Czech friend who was farming, in your state, Senator, in Pennsylvania. So I went up to Pennsylvania and worked on his farm for several months and if my friend hadn’t sold his farm in order to go back to Czechoslovakia, I’d probably still be living in Pennsylvania.” At this point we could see that Bilak was stirring in his chair and I expected he was going to say something especially foul. And he said, “Senator, I want you to know that my parents were married in the chapel at Moravian College in Pennsylvania.”

Q: How about foreign policy? The Czechs and East Germans seemed to have a lock on setting up rather obnoxious police regimes. Was this at all a concern of ours?

BRIDGES: It was a concern; I don't recall if we ever discussed whether saying something to the foreign ministry would have done any good. Certainly the Czechoslovak arms industry was busy producing weapons that got into the hands of people like the Libyans and other people who were bad types in our point of view. At some point the Czechs began to be proficient in producing explosives, including plastic explosives. They were doing certainly some training of Third World soldiers and perhaps policemen. It seems to me that the East Germans were probably more active in that field. I remember, for example, that when I got to Somalia in 1984, I learned that the Somali political prison, way off in the boondocks, had been built by the East Germans, not the Czechs. The Czechs may have done things like that somewhere else in the world, I don't know.

Q: Did you have any people coming in trying so seek asylum?

BRIDGES: I don't remember that we did. I remember how in Moscow people tried to make their way into our embassy, occasionally succeeding. In Prague I don't remember that happening, although it may have. For some months after the 1968 Soviet invasion, the borders were pretty much open so that Czechs and Slovaks who wanted to get out of the country could do so for quite a few months. We tried to do a calculation of how many people had left the country after the invasion. In my recollection we calculated something along the line of 100,000 people, maybe a few more, which was less than 1% of the population. Most of them didn't want to leave, it was their country and they wanted to stay and of course there was the fact that it wasn't so easy to emigrate in the 1970s as it had been in the early 1900s. Czechs want you to think that they are very good at languages, but the fact is that not too many of them are fluent in Western languages, although many had some notions of German. So it was possible that if they left they would not be able to find a job. In Czechoslovakia there was a most unpleasant regime to live under, but if you did your thing, if you were for all intents and purposes a patriotic citizen, life might not be too terrible. Vaclav Havel, for example, came from a very well-to-do family whose property had been confiscated in 1948, and he spent several years in jail for being a dissident, but he nevertheless managed to acquire a rather nice country house in northern Bohemia in the very bad days. He still has the house. I have never been there, but I have seen photographs and it's quite a fine house.

So what people in Prague would do is work at their jobs until Friday afternoon, and around two o'clock on Friday afternoon you would see the roads clogged; as clogged as they could be, not every Czech had a car but there were lots of people heading out of town. So from Friday afternoon until late Sunday or even Monday morning, they worked at what they really wanted to do and that was to improve their little houses or villas in the country, or go hiking or skiing and so forth and so on. And to some extent that probably saved their sanity.

Q: Was there any pressure coming from Czech groups in the United States to do something?

BRIDGES: Not that I remember. I think basically the Czech and Slovak immigrant groups in the United States at that point pretty much shared the opinion of the State Department: the leadership in Prague and Bratislava was a bad leadership, and they were going to have to be replaced by others some day for change to come about in Czechoslovakia. But when such change was going to come about, or what was going to bring it about, none of us could foretell. One key fact was the Soviets had not brought about the complete revolution that they probably would have desired in countries like Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak revolution was much less complete than that of the Bolsheviks; that is to say that in Russia the intelligentsia was destroyed or emigrated and the business classes were destroyed or emigrated. The well-to-do farmers and peasants were killed; many of them starved to death during the process of collectivization. That simply did not happen in Czechoslovakia. A number of people had come west after 1948 and again after 1968, but most of them stayed in place, and since it was only 25 years since the Communists had taken over, there were still many people who knew what it was like to be a member of a democratic, very prosperous and industrialized country, which was what Czechoslovakia had been before the Second World War. And so they had some hope for the future.

The week before my wife and I left Prague, the man whose father had been shot by the Wehrmacht in retaliation, and his wife the fashion industry person, had us over. I think he was a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and I think his wife was too, but it was clear from things we had said to each other that they were basically Czech patriots. So that evening I said, "Let's talk about what is going to happen in this country, because the Soviets have not solved the problems, they have not purged everybody that they would like to purge; the Czechs are still the Czechs although living under a terrible system. What is going to happen?" And he replied that he couldn't make any predictions as to how long the current situation was going to continue, but he could say this: the younger generation was a healthy generation, they were not deceived, and that is what he put his hopes in and he hoped that I would do the same. I always remembered that. He certainly had no early hope for change and that was 1974. It was another fifteen years before the great change came.

Q: I heard that a country like Czechoslovakia is so small that it really becomes subservient to the Nazis.

BRIDGES: They couldn't stand up to them. There had been a chance in 1938 that they could have stood up against the Wehrmacht, but only if the French or the British or the Soviets had helped them.

Q: Were we careful within our mission to not stir up the Czechs because we're not going to do anything? There's sort of a lesson from 1956 where we were probably a little too eager to push the Hungarians.

BRIDGES: Certainly we had no intent to try to stir up the Czechs and they probably wouldn't have believed us if we had tried to. An interesting thing happened. The Secretary of State was William Rogers and the National Security Advisor was Henry Kissinger. Dr. Kissinger was clearly in command, running the relationship with the Soviet Union, the relationship with China, and he wasn't necessarily wasn't using the State Department and the Foreign Service and the Secretary of State. I recall very well that Kissinger had gone to Moscow without Ambassador Jacob Beam, our ambassador to the Soviet Union, even knowing that Kissinger was there dealing with Soviet leaders. Rogers, we heard, was trying to carve a small niche for himself. Kissinger had the Soviet relationship, but he left Mr. Rogers the relationship with the Eastern Europeans which was not too important for the U.S. The initial meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was held in Helsinki. While that meeting was going on, we were told that the Secretary of State was going to visit Prague on his way home. That was a little surprising to us because NATO had more or less agreed that after the Soviet invasion, foreign ministers of NATO would not visit Prague, and none had. And now here comes the American foreign minister. Well, we followed orders, we told the Czechs and they were really pleased because it looked like the NATO embargo on visits was ended. Mr. Rogers got to see the president and the prime minister an d the secretary general of the party; they pulled out all the stops, it was great fun. The foreign minister, Bohuslav Chnoupek, hosted a great party for Rogers in a Prague wine cellar. After the wine party my wife and I went back to the ambassador's residence, where Mr. Rogers was staying. It was spring and we sat out in the garden, just Ambassador and Mrs. Sherer and Secretary Rogers and my wife and me. Bud Sherer's wife, Carroll Sherer, was and is an extremely sharp, sophisticated, fine woman. Her husband was a fine ambassador; I think Carroll Sherer could have potentially been a better one. She's a marvelous woman. And she started asking William Rogers about this visit. And he finally said, "Well, the President didn't really want me to come but I just thought I should." And so he had, causing other NATO countries to wonder. He went back to Washington and it was several weeks later that his resignation was announced. Whether Kissinger used this as the last piece of evidence he needed to use with Mr. Nixon to get rid of him - and to replace him as Secretary of State - I don't know.

Q: You were there in Prague during the initial Helsinki meeting. Did you have any feeling that this might turn out to be something?

BRIDGES: It's hard to remember what I was thinking at the time. Clearly it would depend largely on how far the Soviets were going to go on exchanges on security and cooperation, and we didn't know at that point. A main question for Washington was what the Soviets would do about allowing Jewish emigration from the USSR. Richard Perle, who worked for Senator Jackson, was the author of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and I thought it was one of the stupider pieces of legislation; instead of forcing the Soviet Union to increase Jewish emigration, it led them to decrease it. So the Soviets wanted to be hard-headed about contacts with the west, and their police were very hard-headed and cruel.

Q: Did your wife reconcile going to Prague over having that nice place in Rome?

BRIDGES: Oh, she did. She was not anxious to go, but she got to know Prague well. We had served in Moscow with Arthur Wortzel and his wife and we had not been close to them. I think that when I told Mary Jane that we were going to Prague, she said, "Well, the Wortzels are there." And I said, "Yes, but they are due out next summer." In the event, he didn't leave that next summer, he was there for my whole stay and was my immediate superior. The Wortzels and the Bridges co-existed.

Q: In '74 was Watergate going on? How did this play in Czechoslovakia?

BRIDGES: I don't remember if the Czechoslovak press was using it, but we returned to the U.S. that June, during the House hearings. Earlier in 1974, we were getting ready to leave and the Personnel bureau had told me that I had been designated to go to the National War College in the autumn of 1974. Ambassador Sherer said, "You want to do that?" And I said, "Sure." And he said, "Don't you think it would be better, for senior training, if you could spend a year, as I did, in the international affairs seminar at the Kennedy School at Harvard?" And I said, "Yeah, that would be great fun. But I have already been assigned to the War College." He said, "Well, if you'd like to go to Harvard, I'll see what I can do." I said certainly, and thank you very much. They changed my orders, and so I would go to Harvard - at which point I got a telegram from the Director General of the Foreign Service, who was my first boss in the State Department, Nathaniel Davis, asking if I would like to come join him in Personnel as the head of a two-officer unit working on Foreign Service personnel policy. Well, I loved Nat Davis and I was concerned about the state of the Service, so I passed up senior training to go work for Nat Davis.

Q: So you did this from '74 to when?

BRIDGES: 1974 to 1975. In 1975 I got promoted within Personnel to become head of the Office of Performance Evaluation, which ran the evaluation and promotion board system. I did that for another year, until 1976, when I went to the Executive Secretariat as the third of three deputy executive secretaries. I knew from the man I was replacing, Peter Moffat, that it was not a terribly taxing job but I figured that if I did a good job and stayed a year, maybe I could move up a notch inside the Executive Secretariat. What happened instead was that after Jimmy Carter was elected president, Mr. Vance had become Secretary of State and he named as his Executive Assistant Peter Tarnoff. One day, it seems, Tarnoff went to Vance and told him we didn't need a separate Executive Secretary; Tarnoff could combine both jobs and do them both. Then he brought in an officer or two that he knew, and he told me that I could stay where I was as the third of three deputies. I didn't like the idea of working for Tarnoff, frankly, and I didn't want to stay another year in a dull job. So I said, "Thanks, Peter, but I'll go somewhere else." The question was, where? I learned from my friend Dick Vine that the new Secretary of the Treasury, Michael Blumenthal, had decided that he wanted a proper executive secretariat.

Mr. Blumenthal had been in the State Department himself and he remembered that we had a really good Executive Secretariat; there was only a small one in Treasury. So he took on, temporarily, Jeanne Davis. Jeanne Davis was a fine woman who had been in the State Department for many years and had then become Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. She was retired by Zbigniew Brzezinski when he moved in to NSC, and she then went to Treasury simply to design an executive secretariat for Mr. Blumenthal, but she didn't want to take it over. So I volunteered for the job; I knew next to nothing about what the Treasury did, but I had some pretty good experience in helping to run a secretariat. So in 1977 I became the Executive Secretary of the Treasury and was there until 1978 when I was asked to come back to the Department of State.

Q: Let's go back to your time working with Nat Davis. What were you trying to do?

BRIDGES: I was distressed that the managers of the Foreign Service had concluded that all Foreign Service work could be divided into four cones. I thought that was oversimplification. It didn't advance the work of the Department or the Foreign Service, and it didn't help the careers of individual officers very much. Certainly there had to be some degree of specialization. But the people who devised the cone system could never explain how it was that the best officers were going to get to the top of the Foreign Service if they stayed mainly in one area, when the precepts for promotion to the top insisted that the individual must have a mastery of all facets of the Foreign Service. The other thing was that the Department had been convinced by a small group of personnel officers that we needed to get the Civil Service Commission out of the building. In other words, they said we needed a personnel system that the Secretary of State and the Director General of the Foreign Service controlled without interference from the Civil Service Commission. And so it was proposed and agreed that almost all professional-level Civil Service employees of the Department should become Foreign Service Reserve officers. But there was a weakness in all that. These officers who were domestic only and never served abroad were going to get the same retirement benefits that Foreign Service officers had, benefits that were more generous because they did service abroad and were more susceptible to hardships.

Anyway, Nat Davis had some misgivings about all this and I wanted to do something about it. Among other things, one had to wonder what the Congress would think and do. The other thing that concerned me was that the evaluation system didn't seem adequate. I became dimly aware that there were corporations and agencies that used other, additional kinds of evaluation. So I went to work on all these things, together with the one junior officer who was working with me. Certainly in my first year I learned a lot about the personnel system, and after a year I was ready to take over the performance evaluation system.

Q: How did you find performance evaluation?

BRIDGES: It was a great job; not too many Foreign Service officers would say this but it was a great experience. It was very useful. I had a great deputy who was a Civil Service

officer, GS-15, an African-American named Alfred O. Haynes who had been in the Department since he had started as a clerk when he was 18 or 20 years old. So he had been in the Department for perhaps 20 years, and he knew the personnel system up and down. Of the Foreign Service officers I worked with, the best was Dufour Woolfley, whom I had known in Italy. I would say that Bridges, Haynes, and Woolfley worked very well together. We pushed for introducing the assessment center system, which had been pioneered by OSS and then AT&T, into the Foreign Service. My idea was that it should be used at first as part of the examination for a candidate who was to enter the Service at the bottom. Secondly it should be used as a part of the evaluation process for officers being considered for promotion to senior ranks. Although there was a lot of talk about passing the senior threshold, that simply meant that one more selection board looking at evaluation files. I thought that an officer up for promotion to the senior Service should probably go before an oral examination panel, just as entering candidates did. I went through a couple of seminars on the subject of personnel assessment, I talked with a couple of large companies and banks, and Woolfley and I went over to the Coast Guard to spend a day. The Coast Guard had not too many more commissioned officers than we did. We had over 3,000, they had 6,000, so we had something in common at least as regarded size. Anyway, it was a good year and we helped redesign the evaluation form, which is always going to be in the process of redesign; but I think we came up with a form that was somewhat better than it had been and that also met legal requirements. For example, we got rid of the notion that an officer's spouse should be discussed in the evaluation of the officer.

Q: At that time while you were in Personnel, were the issues of discrimination against women or lack of minorities around?

BRIDGES: The discrimination against women officers had certainly become fairly serious. The question of possible discrimination against African-Americans or Hispanic officers didn't loom so large, I think partly because there were so few. There was a woman officer named Alison Palmer who was very fierce in her denunciation of the Department for allegedly discriminating against her as a woman. But there were other cases, too.

Q: Were you concerned with these, or were these just things you heard about? Were you tailoring the evaluations to this?

BRIDGES: Certainly we were tailoring the evaluation system to try to rid it of any possibility of discrimination on racial or gender or medical grounds. It was about that time that it became inadmissible to say anything about an officer's medical or physical condition, which had been possible before that.

Q: Alcoholism can be considered a medical problem. At the same time we all know of officers who have been incapacitated for long periods of time because of alcoholism. Did that come up at all?

BRIDGES: Yes. The solution was that the alcoholic officer had to be identified, had to be put in treatment; but the evaluation of his or her work had to be accomplished simply on the basis of what work the individual did or didn't do, how he or she did the work or didn't do the work, without reference to the disease. This should be the case for alcoholism as it was for some other debilitating disease, and I agreed with it. Sometimes it was a little hard to agree to that but in the end I certainly did. You must not be oblivious to, or fail to report bad performance of, an alcoholic officer, but you simply don't say on the report 'the damned fall-down drunk.'

Q: How did you find Treasury? You were there from when to when?

BRIDGES: Could I say first a little more about performance evaluation? I think I said earlier that my first year in Moscow I was the Assistant General Services Officer. My boss was James Moran and his boss, the chief admin officer, was Robert Davis. It was not the job I felt I was created to do but I did it faithfully for 40 hours a week, with expectations of going on and upward to the political section. At the end of my year there, Jim Moran wrote an efficiency report on me that, he told me, was positive but not terribly laudatory. It then went to Bob Davis for his reviewing statement. At that time the individual was not permitted to see the efficiency report until back in Washington. Davis didn't like me, he didn't like Moscow, and he left after a year with tooth trouble, at least that was the story. That was in 1963. In 1964 I was completing my year as a political officer in Moscow, it had been a great year. I was certainly well seen by the political counselor, Mac Toon, and my immediate boss, Ken Kerst. One day I got a letter from the Department of State saying that I had been ranked in the bottom ten percent of my class, and that they would not take action at this time to separate me from the Service, but I had better shape up. It was the greatest shock that I had ever had, next to the death of my father three years earlier. I had simply no idea that this sort of evaluation report had been done on me. What Jim Moran had written had not been damning, but Davis had been pretty negative. Reports were written in laudatory style, and here came one that was certainly not laudatory, so the board placed me in the bottom ten percent. That told me something about evaluations. By the time I went into the Bureau of Personnel that system had changed, and the officer from the beginning could see his reports. They even encouraged officers to write their own description of their performance before the rating and reviewing officers went on to say what they believed the officer had done. Anyway, that Moscow experience made a strong impression on me and made it all the more important to me to do the right thing in Performance Evaluation when I was running the office.

Another word about Performance Evaluation. It was when I was there that I received a phone call one day from the famous Bob Woodward of the Washington Post, saying that he understood that I was corrupting the Foreign Service promotion system. I was astounded; I gave some credit to Woodward and his colleague Mr. Bernstein for saving our republic through their Watergate reporting, and here he is saying I'm a corrupt personnel officer. So I invited him to come in and then I told Carol Laise, who had become Director General of the Foreign Service, she had replaced Nat Davis. She was a

little bit concerned, but said, “Okay, let him come in.” What had happened was that under the Foreign Service Reserve system, a number of Civil Service officers had been given Foreign Service Reserve commissions. One of them was the head of the Foreign Buildings Office, FBO. He had become a Foreign Service Reserve Officer of Class Two. Carol Laise had called me in one day, some months earlier, and said, “I understand that so-and-so can not be promoted to Class One, although he is serving in a Class One position. Why is this?” And I said, “Well, Carol, we have more than one case like this. Basically those specialist positions are being allocated to the pool which we use to compute possible promotion numbers for mainstream Foreign Service officers.” She said, “I don’t think that’s fair.” And I said, “I don’t think it’s terribly fair either, but the system that has been in effect for some time. Let me see just how many cases there are, and I will come back to you with a recommendation.” So Al Haynes and I got together, and we found there were three cases of Foreign Service Reserve officers of Class Two who were serving in Class One positions but could not be promoted to Class One because the numbers were allocated to promotions of generalists. So we sent a memo to Carol Laise proposing the system ought to be changed so that if the selection board reviewing them recommended them for promotion, this could be accomplished. She agreed, and of the three of them the guy in charge of the Foreign Buildings Office was promoted. I think one of the other two was promoted, but the third was not. Somebody told Woodward about this, adding to this what I didn’t know, that the head of the Foreign Buildings Office was a protégé of a well-known Congressman who was head of the State appropriations subcommittee. Somebody had apparently gone to Woodward and said, “Look what they are doing for the Congressman's creature in the State Department.” And then this person invented something which was not true: that I had known all of this and had done what I did to please a Congressman. And so Woodward came to my office, and told me he knew on good authority that I was corrupting our system. At this point I called in Al Haynes to join me. I explained to Woodward that you couldn’t really corrupt a Foreign Service selection board even if you did something with the head of the Performance Evaluation office. The board was really independent, there was absolutely no way it could be corrupted. And what had been said about me, that I had acted on behalf of a Congressman, was a total lie. So in the end Woodward went away that afternoon after an hour or so, saying he understood what I was saying but he was not totally convinced. I telephoned him at his office after that and said, “You know, Mr. Woodward, I just want to be very clear. I can’t say that there is no corruption in the system, that there was no pressure put on the Department by the Congressman. But if there was, I don’t know anything about it.” A day or two after there was an article in the Washington Post about this whole mess, saying that Bridges thought pressure had been put on the Department. That was a quarter-century ago, and I am now willing to leave open the possibility that Woodward had not understood what I said when I called him, although I do speak good English. In any case what he reported me as saying was untrue, and for a long time after that I thought if I ever saw Bob Woodward again I would spit in his eye. To me it was really disillusioning, that this famous journalist should pervert what I had told him.

Q: You went from this to the Treasury?

BRIDGES: No, I went to the Executive Secretariat in State, in 1976.

Q: You say you weren't really doing much there.

BRIDGES: No, there was an Executive Secretary and two Deputies senior to me, and the senior Deputies had most of the action. But I hoped to become one of the senior Deputies. And toward the end of my term there I did have some fun. The Executive Secretary at the time was Buck Borg, C. Arthur Borg. He gave me the job of taking care of the transfer of paper between the old Kissinger secretaryship and the new Vance one. The most interesting part of that was that I learned that Hal Sonnenfeldt, my old friend and colleague from the 1950s, who was now the Counselor of the Department, had a couple of file cabinets full of classified documents that he was planning to take with him when he left the Department along with Mr. Kissinger. I went to him, and said, "You can't do that. These are official papers." He said, "No, it's personal stuff." I read him the text of the law; these were official documents. So I said, "What I need to do is go through them and make sure that these are official documents." He said, "But this is really super secret stuff." "You know me, Hal, I'm not going to talk to anybody else about it, but I need to be able to say to someone that this is official paper." So I spent a day going through everything. The main thing I remember about that is that it became clear for the first time to me that Sonnenfeldt had been used by Kissinger as his emissary in any number of cases. As I mentioned earlier, Kissinger when he was National Security Adviser had gone to Moscow and seen the Soviets without our ambassador knowing about it. And certainly Sonnenfeldt, with or without ambassadors knowing about it, had had high-level contacts all over the world that almost no one in the Department knew anything about. Indeed I suspect they still don't know to this day. When Mr. Kissinger came out with the most recent volume of his memoirs, I looked as I always in the index to see what Kissinger had to say about various people, including Sonnenfeldt. Basically the only thing he had to say about Sonnenfeldt in that volume was to recall in a somewhat pejorative way the case of the so-called Sonnenfeldt Doctrine, which had come about in the 1970s when Hal talked a little carelessly about the Soviet Union and its pressures on Eastern Europe. Kissinger had said nothing at all in his book about all the help that Sonnenfeldt gave him all those years, in maintaining these very confidential and high-level contacts around the world. I said something to Hal about that, when I met him later at some conference, and he basically said that it didn't matter. But I hope at some point he will write his own memoirs.

Q: I have interviewed him.

BRIDGES: Well, somewhere there are those two cabinets full of paper, I have no idea where they are now, I hope they are in the National Archives. Someday someone will want to go through them, if it hasn't been done.

Q: When you went to Treasury what were you bringing with you?

BRIDGES: I was bringing with me a pretty good knowledge of how to run a secretariat.

Again, the secretariat in the Treasury had existed earlier, but only as a small correspondence unit. It had been redesigned by Jeanne Davis. What I had to do first was fill some jobs. I had a deputy who was given to me, a hard-working younger woman from South Carolina who was not a career employee, but a very good person. I also had, to handle paper, a staff of two officers, one Civil Service, one a Foreign Service officer. The Foreign Service officer was Aurelia Brazeal, who was later ambassador to Kenya. They were both fine. The two of them basically worked to improve the papers that the bureaus of the Treasury produced for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Papers that the bureaus had produced and were sending to the secretariat were in many cases too wordy or too much off the point to go to Blumenthal without redos. I also knew, from the daily intelligence summaries that were done by the CIA and the State Executive Secretariat for top officers, that we badly needed something like that for the Secretary of the Treasury. He got the CIA daily report, but he needed something that was more pointed towards the work of the Treasury. So we hired a young officer who put together a small staff, and overnight they would produce a top secret report of about five or six pages drawn from all kinds of sources, ranging from the most sensitive kinds of intelligence to press reports. This provided the basic information that Mr. Blumenthal needed to know at the beginning of each day, and early each morning it was sent to him, the Deputy Secretary, and the Under Secretaries. In fact one or two Saturdays I drove by his house to give him the report.

Q: Did you get to the correspondence, or were you strictly on the intelligence side?

BRIDGES: I went there with really no knowledge of the work of the Treasury, but I worked very hard, talking to the senior people in the various bureaus, and of course there was a wide range of kinds of work. I discovered that there was also a very wide range in the effectiveness of these bureaus. I had come out of personnel work not long since and I retained an interest in career development. I remember very well my impression that the best of the Treasury bureaus in terms of career development was the Internal Revenue Service, which at that time had only one political appointee, the Commissioner. Everybody else was a career employee, and they had adopted the assessment center techniques that I had wanted to introduce into the State Department. They had done a very good job of promoting, developing, and transferring around their officers so that the best of them were fit to go to the very top of the Revenue Service. I could see these things mainly in their recommendations for promotion, because the recommendations for senior promotions had to go to the Secretary for approval, so they came through me.

Q: You were there for how long?

BRIDGES: Just a year. I must add that the Deputy Secretary, who was Robert Carswell, had come from a big New York law firm, but he had been executive assistant to Douglas Dillon when he was Secretary of the Treasury. So Bob Carswell knew a lot about Treasury and we got on all right, though I think he wasn't as strong on me as Blumenthal was. Blumenthal, I discovered one day, had been a career Foreign Service officer. He took me along one day when we were going up to Capitol Hill, and as we were driving

along he mentioned it. I said, "I didn't know that." And he said, "Oh, yes." He had been Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Economic and Business Bureau at State, and had come into the Department to work on the Kennedy Round of trade negotiations. He had been a Foreign Service Reserve officer of Class One, not a career appointment. But then he had been able to convert to the career Service as a Foreign Service officer of Class One, FSO-1. And he said, "At one point I went to the personnel bureau and said, after I finish the job in EB, what next? And they said, well, you could probably get an ambassadorship in some small country in West Africa." He said to me that he could imagine himself sitting in some small capital in West Africa with nothing to do but try to convince the president of the republic that they should vote for us in the United Nations, which they were not going to do. So, he said, he decided that he would get out of government and go back into business, which he did with great success.

Anyway, I was prepared to stay at Treasury for quite a bit longer when Gerald Helman, an officer I had known since we were junior officers together, came to me one day and said that he wished that I would come back to State to work for him in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, to replace Bob Barry as the director of the Office of United Nations Political Affairs. UNP in those days was probably the most prestigious office in the Department. I knew I had to come back to the State Department some day, at some point, or they would forget about me. So I went to Mr. Blumenthal, who agreed to let me go. I said, "Mike, you have to do an efficiency report on me." And he said, "I know, I know they're important." So I said, "Should I give you a draft for you to look at and make revisions to?" He said yes, he wished I would do that. So I drafted an efficiency report for him to sign about me and I made it very factual; I didn't add superlatives and I gave a very objective description of the job I had done, which to my mind was a good job. I inserted no really laudatory statements. After the draft had been in his office for a couple of weeks I asked his secretary whether he still had the thing and she said, "We gave it to Bob Carswell." My heart sank a little bit because, as I have mentioned, Bob Carswell was not quite as strong on me as Mike Blumenthal was. I had not used superlatives in my draft, but when it came out of Bob Carswell's office, I found he had dropped any comparatives. In other words instead of writing 'excellent,' I might have said 'very good,' and Carswell had dropped the 'very.' So it was even less laudatory, but it had been typed in final form and there was Blumenthal's signature. So the deal was done - and the next year I unexpectedly got promoted to Class One. Many years later, someone who had been on the selection board that had ranked me high enough to get promoted said to me one day, "You know, we saw the efficiency report that Mike Blumenthal had written on you. He mentioned in it that he himself had been a Foreign Service officer, and it was obvious that he himself had written the report, a straight report without any exaggeration, and so we believed every word and we ranked you high enough to get promoted." Such is the world. Anyway, in 1978 I came back to the State Department to become the Director of UN Political Affairs.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. So we'll pick it up in 1978, UN Political Affairs.

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Today is the 7th of November, 2003. Peter, you said you wanted to pick up a few things about...

BRIDGES: About my year in Treasury Department, which was from 1977 to '78. I went there jumping into the unknown, and the Treasury was one of three Federal agencies that I had a chance to work in during my Foreign Service career. There was also the State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Some people after me, I found, were reluctant to get out of the State Department and take an assignment in another agency. I found the work interesting and it certainly didn't hurt my career. Secondly, when I joined the Treasury, the Secretary who was W. Michael Blumenthal made it clear in the first staff meeting that I attended that I was a senior officer of that department, and when he put out a list of the senior officers along with the under secretaries and assistant secretaries, there was me as the executive secretary of the department. That certainly made it easier for me to function in the department and to pound, if not literally, on the desks of bureau heads and say that Mike Blumenthal needed a paper, or information, and he needed it quickly and in good form.

Finally it occurs to me to say a few words about the only trip abroad that I ever made with Mr. Blumenthal which was in November of 1977. We had in the Treasury secretariat, as I mentioned earlier, one Civil Service officer and one Foreign Service officer who were extremely capable and more than willing to travel with Mr. Blumenthal on this trip abroad. But I had never done that sort of traveling when I was in the Executive Secretariat in the State Department, so I said I would go as the staff man. It was quite an experience. President Carter let us use Air Force Two. Along with Mr. Blumenthal on the trip was the number three in the department, the Under Secretary for Monetary Affairs, Anthony Solomon, who had long experience in government, including some years in the State Department. There was also the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, Fred Bergsten, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, and probably a total of 10 or 12 people from the Treasury plus several journalists who tagged along. It was hard work for me; the plane was equipped with telegraphy, so I could send messages to and from embassies. Unfortunately, at the time we left Andrews Air Force Base for the Middle East, a lot of the arrangements still had not been made. The result of that was in the first week of the trip, I slept a total of 14 hours. I hadn't realized that one could get by on so little sleep and still function, but I managed to do that. I didn't do much sightseeing when I got to Cairo, I wished I could go with the Secretary to the Egyptian Museum but I did go with him out to the pyramids. The only sightseeing I did otherwise was in Jerusalem, where the Secretary was originally supposed to be given a tour of the Old City by Teddy Kollek, who was mayor of Jerusalem. Mr. Kollek had come to Washington not too long before that and had said to the Secretary, "When you come to Jerusalem I'll give you a tour of the city." And Mike Blumenthal apparently had said "Fine." The State Department learned about this, and reminded Mr. Blumenthal that American officials were not to visit East Jerusalem under escort of Israeli officials because we did not recognize the incorporation of East Jerusalem into Israel. So Blumenthal sent word to Kollek that he was sorry but he couldn't accept his kind offer. Kollek then said in effect, "I don't want to

see you." The result of all this was that Mr. Blumenthal had his tour of the old city of Jerusalem given to him by the chief archaeologist of the Rockefeller Museum, who was an Israeli. I just had to go on that; I decided I could leave my telegram writing for two to three hours and I went with him. For three hours we walked up and down the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem with this man who probably knew every stone in the city. It was an amazing tour, one of the good experiences of the trip.

Other parts of the trip were quite different. We went to Tehran where the ambassador was William Sullivan and the Deputy Chief of Mission was Jack Miklos. Ambassador Sullivan had a stag dinner for the Treasury people. There were about twenty of us, from the Treasury and the embassy, sitting around the table. My recollection of the dinner is mainly Mr. Sullivan explaining to Mr. Blumenthal all the good and positive things about the Shah's regime and the Shah himself. What Sullivan wasn't saying, Miklos was adding. Meanwhile Tony Solomon, who had served in Iran during World War II, was whispering in Blumenthal's ear, "Don't believe a thing that they're saying, it's a pretty bad regime." It was a curious visit in other ways as well. The Minister of Finance, who was Blumenthal's host, apparently didn't think he had a proper place in which to offer a luncheon for Mr. Blumenthal, so he borrowed the dining room in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although the Iranians knew that we were a male group only, they invited a lot of ladies too. I remember sitting at a table between an Iranian admiral and some sort of Iranian princess or baroness. Much of the talk was in French, about the last time they saw Paris, and I thought, *what a weird society.* And indeed that society didn't last too much longer. The trip to the Middle East being concluded, we flew to Rome and then to Bonn. Blumenthal met with the Italian and German Ministers of Finance, and then he flew to Berlin. He had been born in Berlin before World War II and although he had returned at least once, he had never been to Berlin as an American official. I think it was quite an emotional experience for him in some ways; he had been careful in Bonn to speak English, as an American official, to the Germans, but in Berlin he decided it was all right to speak German. There was a luncheon given for him by the mayor of West Berlin and the mayor gave a speech and offered a toast to Mr. Blumenthal, and Mr. Blumenthal responded for five or ten minutes in what sounded like pretty good German. The gentleman sitting next to me said, "It's quite amazing. I know that Blumenthal left Germany in his early teens, but he speaks beautiful educated German." And now, you know, Mike Blumenthal is the head of the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

On the return, flying from Berlin to Washington, I was talking to the Secretary for a minute and he said he was going to be seeing President Carter. I said, "What do you think about sending him a message ahead of time summarizing your trip?" And he said, "Yeah, that's a good idea, why don't you draft me something." So I drafted him a telegram that we sent from the plane, which as I recall basically said that the Arab states were not about to do very much for us in terms of special arrangements for energy sources, and that the Europeans had commented very sharply to us that it looked like the Americans still thought all the oil in the world was in Texas, which was decidedly not the case. So he sent the cable off, and later said that he had had a meeting with the President and the President had been appreciative to get this heads up.

Q: Well, we talked about 1978. You had come back to the State Department, and you were going to be... what was the job?

BRIDGES: Director of the Office of United Nations Political Affairs in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs.

Q: You did that from when to when?

BRIDGES: From late summer of 1978 to mid-1980. Two years.

Q: Who was the head of the political affairs when you got there?

BRIDGES: My predecessor had been Robert Barry. Bob Barry moved up to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs in the bureau. I was assigned to work under Gerald Helman who was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs. The Assistant Secretary was Bill Maynes, a very fine man who had been a Foreign Service officer; he was one of several officers who had resigned from the Foreign Service years before in protest over the American bombing of Cambodia.

Q: What was your job?

BRIDGES: Basically what UNP did was to oversee the formulation of the American position on any political question that arose in any United Nations body, whether it be the Security Council, the General Assembly, or one of the specialized agencies. It was a difficult job, not a very satisfying or rewarding one because of so many people that we had to deal with. There were very few things that UNP did on our own. Namibia was under South African control at the time, and anything that we proposed on Namibia or on the apartheid regime in South Africa had to be agreed with by the Bureau of African Affairs and almost always the Policy Planning Staff. Anything on the Arab-Israel problem had to go to the Near Eastern Bureau and, again, also to the Policy Planning Staff. I had never had very much to do with the Policy Planning Staff. At that time most of the officers on it were mid-grade, some career, some from outside the Foreign Service. It was rather disappointing to see that they didn't find it satisfactory to work just on policy questions. They wanted to be operators, they wanted to get into the middle of things, and it was a little difficult to distinguish what they were doing or wanted to do, from what a desk officer was doing in a geographic bureau. So they were one more element that one had to deal with and come to terms with.

Q: Who was the head of policy planning? I assume that person would set the tone for this.

BRIDGES: It had been Anthony Lake. But I never dealt with him, but I had known him slightly while I was in the Executive Secretariat. Years later, I did some work for him when he was working on the first Clinton presidential campaign.

Q: Can you name names of the people who would charge around and do things?

BRIDGES: Oh, I can't remember. Steve Sestanovich was one of the best members of the Policy Planning Staff at that point. He was a very talented officer, a specialist in the Soviet and East European field, who later was at CSIS, I don't know where he is today. We were friends but we had some differences.

Q: So policy planning is one of these things like the job of the Counselor of the State Department. It depends on the administration. Sometimes policy planning is just writing speeches, from what I gather, the real policy planning is seldom done by policy planning.

BRIDGES: Well, the real problem to me was that not enough policy planning was done anywhere in the Department. In some contrast, I thought the Pentagon had good planning.

Q: Let's think of the Arab-Israeli issue. During this period of '78 to '80, what issues did you have to contend with?

BRIDGES: Well, I frankly can't remember explicitly. There was already the question of Israeli settlement in the West Bank, which resulted in Palestinian terrorism against the Israelis. The question whether the agreements, whatever President Carter managed to do, would bring about peace or something less than that. But if Policy Planning was not planning policy, certainly we in UNP were not. We were simply managing the responses that our people were to give, in the Security Council, or in some agency meeting, because no matter what the agency was, it seemed that Arab-Israel and Namibia would come up. We would protest that UNESCO was not supposed to deal with political issues, that UNDP was not supposed to deal with political issues, but nevertheless they got introduced and so they had to be dealt with.

Q: How did you find UNESCO? This was a time when we were becoming increasingly unhappy with it.

BRIDGES: It was a disappointing agency. But again, I had no direct link. Occasionally I would get to New York to sit in on a meeting of the Security Council or the General Assembly, but mainly I was stuck in Washington on the phone or the LDX. At that point, we had this marvelous new machine in the front office of the International Organization bureau, which was a Long Distance Xerox, and we were actually able to transmit from Washington to New York unclassified texts and documents. It was very useful because someone in the corridors of the United Nations was always floating new text resolutions that of course we wanted to see in Washington as soon as we could. With the LDX we could have everything in ten minutes.

Q: Who was ambassador while you were there?

BRIDGES: It was Andrew Young, and then he resigned after it turned out that he had

meetings with a PLO official without authorization. He was replaced by Donald McHenry, a former Foreign Service officer, a very fine man to whom I did an injustice to in my first book. I said that since the U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations had cabinet status, he could go around the Secretary and Department of State and go straight to the President. Andy Young did so on occasion, and I added that McHenry did so too. Don McHenry told me afterwards, politely, that in fact I was wrong, and that he did not go around the Department, and I apologized and promised that if there were a revised edition of my book I would certainly change what I had said.

Q: I wouldn't swear to it but I have a feeling that the cabinet status of the U.N. Rep when Young left it was dropped, but maybe not. It's been in and out.

BRIDGES: I don't know what the current status is.

Q: You were more a sort of a manager, were you dealing with any of the countries in one way or another?

BRIDGES: Oh, on occasion, yes, I would have a visit from one embassy or another in Washington. One time I called in the minister of a NATO embassy and with prior agreement of the American agency that had furnished the intelligence, I said to him that in contravention of the U.N. embargo on arms sales to South Africa, we had learned that the major arms manufacturer in his country, a manufacturer which was government controlled, had been selling some tens of thousands of rifles to the South African military. So he said he would report that of course, and he came back a week or two later and said that he was sorry but his government couldn't do anything unless they were given the exact details, the invoice numbers, the shipment dates and so forth. Well, we couldn't provide that without compromising our intelligence, nor did his government really need that information to do something about it. So there was a lot of cant about the South African apartheid regime but there was a lot going on being done by other countries. In other words they were having dealings with South Africa that they were simply not supposed to, including the occasional sale by the Saudis of oil to the South Africans.

Q: Gerry Helman was your boss. What did he do?

BRIDGES: Helman was a man whom I had known from the time that he and I were junior officers. He was ahead of me in more ways than one. He had earlier been himself the director of the office that I was taking over. At which point his immediate superior was John Baker, a very good Foreign Service officer whom I had met when he was declared PNG by the Soviet government in 1958 after the Soviets learned that he had made a lot of friends with Russians with whom he played basketball. Anyway, Helman was the office director, John Baker was the Deputy Assistant Secretary and Samuel Lewis was the Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs. This was before I came, but I was told that Sam Lewis would call Gerry Helman up and Helman would tell him what he needed to know about Namibia, and by-and-by it was Helman and Lewis while John Baker was sort of off on the side. I think that at first, from what John Baker

told me before he died, he didn't realize what was going on, and then he did realize that he was simply being left out of the loop. Eventually, John Baker said, Lewis decided that he really didn't need to have John between himself and Helman, so Lewis promoted Helman to be Deputy Assistant Secretary and Baker went off to be director of refugee programs, supposedly with the rank of assistant secretary but that really never eventuated. So Bob Barry came in to replace Helman as UNP director, and then Sam Lewis left and was replaced as Assistant Secretary by Bill Maynes, who was the Assistant Secretary when I arrived. Well, I can be a little slow sometimes, but eventually I realized that Helman was intent on not letting me do what in effect he had done to John Baker, that is to say go around him to Bill Maynes. That sort of thing was not in my operating style, but in any case Helman was intent on basically sitting on me. It was a difficult job, I think I may have worked about 60 hours a week. I kept my sanity by running six miles a morning in Arlington and that made life more tolerable. At one point I got my wife to start running, too, and we joined the Potomac Valley Seniors Track Club and we ran quite a lot of 10-kilometer races.

Q: Well then, is there anything else we should cover during this Namibia period? Was this a time of high negotiations?

BRIDGES: McHenry was very personally involved, however we never really budged the South Africans at that point. We were quite prepared, and of course there was a lot of Congressional pressure, to extend the sanctions against South Africa unilaterally. But what we wouldn't sell to South Africa, others - Europeans, East Asians - would step in to provide to South Africa. There was an arms embargo, an oil embargo and so on but many other countries had normal dealings with South Africa so that new prohibitions put on by U.S. legislation or regulation might make Americans feel good but didn't have much effect on the South African government.

Q: When was it that you left?

BRIDGES: In 1980. I learned that in the European Bureau, they were wanting a new director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs and I leaped at the chance. I might mention that before that happened, the post of the U.S. representative to the European office of the United Nations in Geneva was filled by William Vanden Heuvel, who was a prominent Democrat and a man whom I admired. When I learned that he needed a Deputy Chief of Mission I put in for the job. In September of 1979 I was on a business trip to Europe to compare notes with people at NATO headquarters in Brussels and the European Community offices in Brussels. After that I went to Geneva, and Bill Vanden Heuvel had me for lunch. It was September and his wife had just put their children in school, and he and I shook hands on my becoming his deputy quite soon. Unfortunately for me, the following week Bill was reassigned from Geneva to our mission in New York, and he was replaced by Gerry Helman. I heard from someone in the White House that Helman was to be our new ambassador in Geneva. So I walked in to see Gerry and I said, "Congratulations, Gerry, and by-the-by I don't want to be your deputy." So Gerry went off to Geneva and was replaced. Bill Maynes left too, and our new assistant secretary,

who had been a Congressional staffer for most of his career, wanted me to be Deputy Assistant Secretary under him, replacing Helman, but the job went to a more senior Foreign Service officer. So in mid-1980 I was, again, happy to move to the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: You did Eastern European Affairs from 1980 until when?

BRIDGES: Just until '81.

Q: What was Eastern Europe in those days?

BRIDGES: Well, the definition as far as our office was concerned was the Communist members of the Warsaw Pact, not including the Soviet Union which was dealt with by the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, and not including the German Democratic Republic which came under the Office of Central European Affairs. So I had Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, plus the three Baltic states which were still part of the Soviet Union but with which we maintained relations in Washington.

Q: What were some of the issues that came up during this particular time? This was a transition period. We were between administrations.

BRIDGES: Tito had just died in June of 1980. I took over the office in September and decided without waiting around that I had to take a quick tour of our posts in Central and Eastern Europe, since if I didn't do it now I would probably never do it. My immediate boss at that point was either Jack Scanlan or Robert Barry. Whoever it was at that moment agreed. So I went off to Eastern Europe for pretty much a month and toured all our posts there, embassies and consulates, except for our consulate at Poznan. (End of tape)

In 1980, I was saying, I made a trip to all American posts in Eastern Europe. When I got to Yugoslavia I visited both Belgrade and Zagreb. Talked with the Federal officials in Belgrade and also with top officials in Zagreb. Tito had died several months before and there was a big question over whether Yugoslavia was going to stay together after Tito or not. I came back not perfectly sure what was going to happen; who could be sure? But I had some reassurances from both Serbs and Croats that there was a new generation in Yugoslavia; the old hatreds were there but the new leadership wanted to keep this country together, the Croats as well as the Serbs. As I recall I decided that chances were pretty good that Yugoslavia would remain Yugoslavia. This was long before Milosevic. It was a really interesting trip, it was the longest trip I had made to the area since the spring of 1962 when I had gone with Army officers on a long bus tour through Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

I can't remember many things that happened on the trip but I do recall that when I was in Bucharest I had a very nasty meeting with the head of the consular administration in the Romanian foreign ministry. The situation at the time in the States was protests by

Romanian-Americans in front of the Romanian mission to the U.N. in New York, and the Romanian embassy in Washington. They couldn't march quite up to the buildings because of local ordinances, but there were a lot of protests and of course these were somewhat unnerving to the Romanian officials in the buildings. Anyway, the consular head basically warned me that if we didn't do something about that, there was going to be retaliation against Americans in Bucharest. That was the only time, I recall, that a foreign official ever made a direct threat to me or to my country and I told him to back off and we didn't want to hear anything like that again or they would be sorry.

Q: Did you get to the Baltic countries?

BRIDGES: No, I didn't. I imagine if I had applied for a Soviet visa to go over there I would have been turned down. American embassy officials from Moscow visited there, but I suspect they would have turned me down because they would have understood that I was trying to show that we had particular interest in the Baltic republics.

Q: What was the situation in Poland in 1980?

BRIDGES: Those were the first days when Solidarity was showing its strength. I left the Office of East European Affairs in the early autumn of 1981, and it was in December 1981 that Jaruzelski declared martial law. In the summer of 1981 there was a particular concern that the Soviets might invade Poland as they had Hungary and Czechoslovakia. I didn't think it was going to happen. The intelligence was inconclusive; it was clear as I recall that the Soviets were making preparations in case they had to do it. But I didn't think they were going to do that, and I recall that I used to get a phone call every day from a network correspondent, and I consistently told her that I don't think the Russians are coming, and I was right.

In June 1981 Cardinal Wyszynski, the head of the Catholic church in Poland, died and the question immediately arose, because Poland was going to give him a big funeral, how should we be represented? Our ambassador in Warsaw was Frank Meehan, a very capable career officer, and he would of course attend the funeral. But maybe we should do something more. We wanted to go in step with our NATO allies, and so we put the question to them and basically they decided that they would make this a European Community question; what the EC decided to do would go for all of them. But they couldn't decide for some time. So we decided that no matter what the Europeans or Canadians did, we would send a delegation and there was interest in the Congress in our doing that. So we sent a delegation and the heads were Clement Zablocki, the Polish-American Congressman who headed the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and William Bloomfield, the ranking Republican on the committee, from Detroit, Michigan. We also included Cardinal Krol, the archbishop of Philadelphia, and the head of the largest Polish-American organization, and William Wilson, who was then Reagan's personal representative to the Vatican. I went along as the bag carrier. It was interesting; we flew out of Dulles and Cardinal Krol asked me if I had thought of writing some kind of arrival statement, and I said that one of my officers had drafted a statement which I didn't think

was too good, and Cardinal Krol said, "Well, fork it over, let me see it." So I forked it over, and he shared it with the two Congressmen and we came up with a pretty good statement, and Cardinal Krol then translated it into Polish; his Polish was good. Whereas the head of the Polish-American Congress spoke good Chicago Polish but not in literary style. So we had a statement in Polish when we got off the plane in Warsaw; we flew in from London, where the Air Force had provided us a small jet to fly to Warsaw, so we had this American Air Force plane in Warsaw with "United States of America" on the side of the plane. There was Polish TV waiting to interview us, and the Cardinal walked up to the microphone and read the arrival statement and it was carried on prime-time Warsaw news, and that began a very interesting visit. The funeral was held in Independence Square in the center of Warsaw. They had built a big dais in the center of the square, and at the altar there must have been 30 high churchmen from various countries. It was probably the biggest assembly of churchmen one was likely to see outside of the Vatican. There we were with our fairly high-level delegation, while the Europeans never had decided what to do; as I recall they were represented by their ambassadors. So we had the highest-ranking delegation. The funeral Mass took place in the early afternoon and a huge thunderhead built up and you could hear thunder rumbling, it was a dramatic scene. I thought, *dear God, what happens if it rains?* But it didn't rain. At the end of the Mass the people walked to the Cathedral. The Cardinal was interred in the crypt and the clergyman who presided over that ceremony was the Cardinal Archbishop of Philadelphia.

At some point Lech Walesa, the head of Solidarity, said he would be happy to meet the American delegation. So Frank Meehan arranged for us to have a meeting at the ambassador's residence. And that was an interesting meeting, too. I don't know how many Americans in our embassy in Warsaw had met this man before, but what I remember most about it was that Walesa kept talking about the obvious fact that Americans were going to invest big in the Polish economy. Our delegation member Bill Wilson was a man I have no great respect for, considering what he did later - he flew secretly to Libya to see Qadhafi, in a private plane belonging to an Italian company, which was probably in itself a violation of law; he flew to Bern to intercede with the Swiss on behalf of Mark Rich, who had been convicted of income tax evasion in the United States, and he also tried to importune the U.S. Customs Service on behalf of Archbishop Marcinkus of the Vatican. But in any case on this occasion, in June 1981 in Warsaw, Walesa had gone on at some length about how it was inevitable that Americans were going to be investing in Poland. Wilson said, "Well, how is that? Is it because you're so free of strikes?" Solidarity was leading strikes against industry every other week, it seemed. "Is it because your independence is secure?" And of course nobody knew whether the Soviets were going to invade next week. Wilson had about three or four sound reasons as to why reasonable Western businessmen would think long and hard about why they would invest. It wasn't Walesa's brightest moment, I imagine.

Q: Tell me about this trip you took in the fall of 1980 to Eastern Europe. Did you get many questions about the campaign? At that time, Reagan seemed to be doing very well, but seemed to be a candidate of the far right, sort of a movie star. Was this unsettling or

not? Did you pick up on any of this?

BRIDGES: I don't recall that I did. In any case it strikes me that in general a foreign government that wanted to figure out what was going on in American politics was going to use its embassy in Washington to ask people questions.

I remember some of the less official parts of the trip better; I had decided to travel by train as much as I could. I had friends in both West and East Germany; our ambassador in East Berlin was Herbert Okun, whom I had served with in Moscow. Our minister in West Berlin was David Anderson, whom I had known for years. Neither of those places was a responsibility of my office; they came under Central European Affairs. But the director of CE agreed that it was okay for me to go through Berlin, so I went. I flew in from Warsaw to East Berlin and spent the night with the Okuns, and then somebody picked me up and drove over to West Berlin and David Anderson had a luncheon for me in West Berlin. Then I took the train from Berlin through East Germany, which I had never seen, to Prague. From Prague I took the train to Budapest, from Budapest to Bucharest, Bucharest to Sofia and then Sofia to Belgrade. At some point I started flying instead. It wasn't as successful a train trip as I had expected because it was the beginning of November so the days were short and so when the train left sometimes it was already dark. I counted on the trains having dining cars where I would be able to sit and meet interesting people, but few of them had dining cars. I did have one restful weekend, though, toward the end of what was quite a long trip. My old Moscow buddy Jack Perry was our ambassador in Sofia, and he let me use the embassy villa at Borovets, in the mountains south of Sofia. I spent a pleasant weekend all alone, after weeks of having to deal with Communist officials, and I climbed, but not to the top, the highest mountain in Bulgaria, Musala. I might have made it to the top, but it started to snow and I went into a mountain hut where some Bulgarian hikers saved my life with a bowl of good hot soup.

Q: At that point during the time you were doing Eastern European Affairs, Czechoslovakia was pretty hard line.

BRIDGES: We were interested, I think I mentioned before, in making a new attempt to negotiate with Czechoslovakia a gold and claims settlement, after our earlier attempt had failed when the price of gold went through the roof. I was interested in trying again, and the negotiation was eventually put in the hands of Roz Ridgway who had served already as ambassador to East Germany. And this time, I was very surprised, she succeeded and put through a very good agreement indeed, securing Czechoslovak payment not only of the full amount of our claims but some interest as well.

Q: During this period that you were in Eastern European Affairs what were the main things you were doing? Did you find yourself acting in a capacity to get the new administration to understand how to deal with the Eastern Europeans? This administration came essentially out of the right wing.

BRIDGES: I tried. Poland was a particular problem. Solidarity was not in the

government, but it was certainly being influential politically in pushing Poland toward the West. There was a sizable economic question between us and Poland. The largest share of U.S. Commodity Credit Corporation operations was for Poland. I think it was something like 400 million dollars of credits for the year. The Poles were using these credits to build up their poultry industry. I had heard sometime not long after Mr. Reagan took office in 1981 that he wanted to stop this, that he thought it wouldn't be popular giving credits to a Communist government. I wrote a two-page paper on this, because we knew that Mr. Reagan wouldn't or couldn't read very long papers. I wrote in what I thought was a pretty convincing way that a dollar given to support the Polish economy was about as good as a dollar spent on NATO, given the way Poland was tilting toward the West, and I really believed that. At that time, let me add, we were continuing U.S. grain sales to the Soviet Union - which was threatening Poland. My paper went some ways up in the Department, and came back with the comment that it was too long. Fine, I made it into a one page paper, but I don't think it ever got to the White House. Before it did, in any case, on a day that Secretary of State Haig went to New York, which he rarely did, the President convened a meeting of the National Security Council and said, "No credits for Poland, it's a Communist regime." I was dismayed, I thought it was narrow- minded and foolish, especially in view of our grain sales to Moscow, and I still do. That was the main thing I remember about Reagan's policy towards Eastern Europe.

Q: Were there any other issues that you got involved in during this period?

BRIDGES: It was not a time when we were going to take any initiatives toward Eastern Europe. The embassy in Bucharest had been headed by a career officer, an African-American, Rudolph Aggrey, a very distinguished man. Then the ambassadorship was given by Mr. Reagan to a man named Funderburk from North Carolina. Funderburk was an academic person; he had done his master's essay on Albania and had then decided that that was as far as he needed to go on Albania. He got a Fulbright Scholarship to go to Romania, and his work after Albania was mainly on Romania. By 1981 he was teaching at a small college in North Carolina. The story that I had heard was that after Reagan won, Senator Jesse Helms said to his staff, "Let's look around and see whom we can contribute to the new administration." Supposedly they found in their files a letter that Funderburk had written to Helms, asking for the Senator's help in getting a GS-11 teaching position at some Army post in North Carolina. Senator Helms had not been able to get that for him, but not having been able to get him a GS-11 job at Fort Bragg he managed to get him the ambassadorship to Romania. Now, one can argue in retrospect whether it was wise for us to be as forthcoming with Ceausescu and his regime as we were. We were as forthcoming as we were basically because Romania was kind of a maverick in the Warsaw Pact. Ceausescu was not exactly standing up to the Soviet Union all the time, but he was doing that sometimes. He was certainly making it a little more difficult for the Soviet Union to exercise hegemony over other Warsaw Pact countries. But in any case Funderburk, I began to hear, was murder on his staff and the suspicion was that he was sending classified material to Senator Helms because he disagreed with the Department's agreed policy on Romania. I have no idea whether that was the case or not. I do know that he was mistrusted and disliked by his staff, and I think he returned the

compliment. In any case I didn't have many dealings with him because in the late summer of 1981 the possibility arose that I might go overseas after a very long time in Washington.

At that time the Department regulation said that FSOs could not spend more than eight consecutive years in Washington. I think that now it is a five year rule. In mid-1981 I realized that in one more year, I would be coming up on eight years. In June 1982 I would have served continuously eight years in Washington. It was also the month in which I was going to reach my 50th birthday, which meant I could retire from the Foreign Service, since I had more than 20 years of service. I began to think that that was too much of a coincidence to ignore and I decided that if I was still in Washington in 1982 I would probably retire and see what else I could do at the relatively young age of 50. I really made only one stab in that direction, and that is I went to see John Gardner, the grand old man who had been Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and who had started in his older years an organization called Common Cause. So I saw him and he then sent me to see Fred Wertheimer who was then the president of Common Cause. Nobody offered me a job, but what I wanted to do at that point was simply start talking to people and figure out what life might be like outside the government.

I think it was probably the week after I saw Fred Wertheimer that the news came out that the new American ambassador to Italy was going to be a man named Maxwell Rabb. And I thought immediately, *he's going to need a deputy and maybe I could be it.* I went to see the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the European Bureau who was responsible for that part of Europe; his name was Allen Holmes. Allen and I had served together in Rome 12 years before that. And I thought we were on good terms, and I told him that I would very much like to be the Deputy Chief of Mission in Rome. He didn't say in so many words that I had his support, but he said some positive things. It was only much later that I learned he had decided to support Anthony Quainton who I think had been in college with Allen, in any case they were friends and Allen decided that Quainton would be the better man and said so to Rabb. However, Max Rabb was to interview several possible candidates for the DCM job. I went to the Personnel bureau, and they said I would be on the list. I couldn't be sure that I would be number one in their eyes. I went to the Arlington library and read up all I could on Maxwell Rabb, and it was pretty impressive. He had been a young lawyer in the Eisenhower administration. He went there initially as a junior counsel, but the President realized that he had a flair for organization, and for knocking peoples' heads together. So he was made the secretary to the cabinet, a new position, and from what I read Max Rabb would put together an agenda for cabinet meetings and then would ask cabinet members to circulate papers ahead of time for discussion. The result of this was that cabinet meetings were rather useful and productive, as they had not been before. I also read that sometime after the desegregation decision of the Supreme Court an African-American delegation came to see Eisenhower, headed by the grand old man who was the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Anyway they had gone to see Eisenhower and said, "Mr. President, you think desegregation is a done deal, but you had better look at your armed forces because they are pretty segregated even now." And the result of that was that the President sent Max Rabb to call on the military commanders

around the U.S. and I could imagine him pounding on the desk of the general and saying, "Your officers club is segregated, your base school is segregated, and stop it. Desegregate." And Max Rabb deserves a lot of credit for seeing that desegregation was carried out in the armed forces. So I thought this was the kind of guy I would like to work for; he didn't seem to know too much about Italy, but on the other hand he knew a lot about politics and government. So I decided for once in my life I wouldn't rely on the Bureau of Personnel. I wrote Max Rabb a letter at his law office in New York and sent a brief resume and he called me when he came to Washington and we spent a pleasant hour together. However, it was Tony Quainton who got the job. That was all right, I was enjoying the Office of Eastern European Affairs. I was also beginning to think again that maybe I would look at non-governmental possibilities, when at about five in the morning I got a phone call at our home in Arlington. It was Robert Paganelli, who was Deputy Chief of Mission in Rome but was soon to be reassigned as ambassador to Syria. Robert said, "I know what time it is in Washington, but Max Rabb said 'get Peter on the phone' and I thought you wouldn't mind if I woke you up." And I said, "No, I don't mind." So in about a minute the ambassador was on the phone and he said, "Quainton tells me that he is going to get an embassy of his own, so good luck to him, and you don't need to feel you're my second second choice but I'd like you to be my deputy." And I said, "Delighted, Mr. Ambassador." So by-and-by I went to Rome, although my transfer was held up because Quainton was to go as ambassador to Nicaragua. We were not on the best terms with the Nicaraguan government, and the American request for Nicaraguan agreement to Tony Quainton as ambassador was held up by the Nicaraguans. The Under Secretary of State for Management said that until Quainton got his new job, we were not going to make anybody else DCM in Rome - although I think Rabb had made it very clear to the Department that he was no longer interested in Quainton and he wanted someone else instead. So Quainton finally got to go to Managua, and I could be assigned as DCM in Rome. I went to Rome in the beginning of October 1981.

Q: And you were there from '81 to when?

BRIDGES: I was there from October 1981 until November of 1984. Just over three years.

Q: Well, let's talk about Maxwell Rabb and Italy. Knowing some of the history, it was fortunate that he was not an Italian-American who tended to go and show that they made good in the U.S. and they were coming out of peasant stock and speaking maybe a dialect that nobody understood.

BRIDGES: Exactly. I always opposed the idea that we should send an ambassador to a country because his ancestors came from that country. I'm not saying that such a person should be excluded from consideration, but as a matter of policy we should not favor sending Irish-Americans to Dublin, or Jewish-Americans to Tel Aviv, or Italian-Americans to Rome. When we do so, there is always going to be a question in some people's minds as to whether or not this ambassador is really objective in his or her views.

Q: This is American politics...

BRIDGES: Oh, sure. There is the story that John Volpe, when he arrived in Rome as our ambassador, said in his arrival statement, in Abruzzi peasant dialect, that his parents would be very pleased if they could somehow know that he was becoming the Italian ambassador at Rome.

Q: During this period, what was the situation in Italy politically at that point?

BRIDGES: Well, what the Italians called the years of lead, the years of terrorism, were in general winding down. The Red Brigade terrorists were still active, although soon after I arrived there the Minister of the Interior had a briefing for the ambassador and me with statistics that showed that the number of incidents of terrorism was decreasing. It looked like the Italians were beginning to get a hold on that phenomenon. There is a rather good book written on the Red Brigades, and the author emphasizes that Italy had the worst domestic terrorism in any European country, if you excluded Ulster and the Basque provinces of Spain. We hadn't been there very long, it was December 1981, my wife and I were sitting in bed reading on a Sunday evening and I got a phone call from the diplomatic advisor to the Prime Minister. He said, "Peter, the terrorists have kidnaped an American general and we have set up a crisis room down at Palazzo Chigi" - that was the Prime Minister's office" - and I hope that you will send an officer down there." The political counselor went immediately. The general was a man named James Dozier who had been assigned to the NATO command in Northern Italy, in Verona, and he had been kidnaped. For the next five weeks, from December until January, we were doing all we could and the Italians were doing all they could to find Dozier wherever he might be - if he was still alive. It was an unpleasant time, not least because Washington wanted to send us all sorts of staff we didn't need. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense who had the dual portfolio of Africa and terrorism, a man named Noel Koch, kept telling me that they could send us ten or twenty analysts. That was not what we needed; we didn't need more staff. What would we do with them, particularly if they didn't speak Italian? In any case it was our job to be the embassy and maintain our links with the Italians. After three weeks we got a telegram from the Defense Intelligence Agency that reported that a reliable source had provided information about the town where Dozier was being held prisoner. It was a hillside town with a population of about 30,000 people, red roofed, there were some prominent buildings. I gave the telegram to the Italians, and almost immediately they came back and they said, "Who is this source, we need to know." And we went back to DIA, and they said they couldn't reveal the source. Then they sent us a second detailed telegram which I also shared with the Italians and they said, "You have absolutely got to tell us who this person is." So I went back to DIA and this time the answer came back, "We will tell you, but you must not tell the Italians. The source is a psychic." That was distressing. Of course we didn't tell the Italians.

Eventually the Pentagon said they would like to send a very small Delta force contingent to Italy. How could we refuse? So this group of probably eight men led by one officer came; they were very impressive men, physically fit and very intelligent. Unfortunately none of them had served in Italy and none of them spoke Italian. So what do you do with

a group like that? Eventually the Italians told us that they had a report that Dozier was being held in a village somewhere between Florence and Bologna. If we would like to send the Delta Force up there, they could be useful. So they went up into the Apennines, I suppose with Carabinieri escorts, on Saturday morning. On Monday, Max Rabb had gone off to call on a minister when a phone call came in and my secretary informed me that it was the police station in Padova. I heard this strong voice on the other end saying, "Hi, this is Jim Dozier, who's this?" I had met him just once at a meeting before he was kidnaped and as I say his voice was very strong and I think I nearly broke down. It was the most amazing thing. Anyway, I don't know whether the Italians had deliberately gotten the Delta Force out of the way or not, but they had a source who had ratted on the kidnappers and they had learned that he was being kept hostage in an apartment that was just above a supermarket in Padova. So the Italians waited until one o'clock in the afternoon, when they knew the terrorists would be fixing their pasta for lunch, and they broke in the front door. Nobody was killed; they had been keeping Dozier in a tent that they had put up in the living room, and they made him stay in the tent and made him wear earphones and listen to loud rock music to keep him from understanding where he was. I think the only bad result of his captivity was some hearing damage from the music, but not too much. He was a fine man; was later commander at Fort Knox, and I think at one point he was interested in running for Congress.

Q: Were you there during the Achille Lauro business?

BRIDGES: No, that occurred before I got there. However, I did visit the Achille Lauro, but that was in the summer of 1986. The Christian Democratic Youth organization used the Achille Lauro for a sort of traveling convention as the ship sailed down the Tyrrhenian coast. I had retired from government a month or so earlier, and the U.S. Information Service in Rome asked me if I would like to go give a talk to the Christian Democratic Youth. So I spoke to them on the Achille Lauro and met the captain who was the same captain who had been in command at the time that the terrorists taken over. He was bending over backwards to make it clear that he had no responsibility for the murder of the American. He excused himself a little bit too much and I finally decided that he felt guilty about the hijacking.

Q: Going back to Italy... Were we going through the response of the Soviets putting up SS-20s? This was really a major political question.

BRIDGES: Oh, indeed it was. There was a lot of opposition in Italy to our stationing cruise missiles in Italy. Eventually the missiles were placed at Comiso in Sicily. Then, the Soviets were proposing to build a major new gas pipeline into Western Europe. Our ambassador to France at the time was leading a crusade against this pipeline, arguing that it was going to lead to the Finlandization of Western Europe and so forth. At some point we had a three-headed delegation come to Rome to talk to the Italians against the pipeline. It was three-headed because the Commerce Department, the State Department and the Defense Department couldn't decide which one controlled the question. So each department sent an under secretary. Our three-headed delegation did not impress the

Italians.

Q: How did things play out in Italy from the embassy perspective on getting the cruise missiles in?

BRIDGES: Well, we carried the day. What effect this was having on the Soviet Union was not totally clear and I am not perfectly sure as to what part our missile deployment played. I think I was wrong about Mr. Reagan, in the sense that he was right to deploy the missiles and that the move helped convince the Soviets that we had boundless resources and that we could spend and would spend whatever we needed to on our defense. They began finally to realize that they couldn't keep up with us. They embarked on a very large-scale program to obtain Western technology surreptitiously where they couldn't buy it outright. In 1984 the American ambassador to Italy was having occasional meetings with his Soviet counterpart. Nothing very much went on in their talks. But then someone in Washington had an idea for the following scenario: Max Rabb would invite the Soviet ambassador to lunch and of course the Soviet ambassador would as usual protest that they were a peace-loving government and Max would say, "Yeah, but you're stealing our technology for strategic purposes." The Soviet ambassador would say, "No, we're really not." And Max would get on the phone and call me and say, "Peter, bring that stuff over, would you?" And I would bring him what we had been sent from Washington, and that was a lot of detailed information on just how successful and large the Soviet technology theft program was. In the end it was decided not to do this, but in any case it was clear that Moscow's technology theft program was not making up for their failure to develop their own computer and electronic technology the way we were doing. This played some role in the later downfall of the Soviet system.

Q: How did we view the political system in Italy? It seems to me that we were spending an inordinate rate of time looking at this ballet that was going on in the central government. Basically the same people were exchanged. And the PCI, the Italian Communists, at that time...

BRIDGES: My memory will betray me if I try to think of what our opinions were at that time compared to what they were later. Clearly it was a tired political system and a pretty corrupt political system. People used to talk about Japan, Inc.; I always thought there was a sort of Italy, Inc. too. Press, politicians cooperated. I think I mentioned earlier that we had understood, many years before, that all of the major Italian political parties present in Sicily including the Communist Party, had dealings with the Mafia in Sicily, although perhaps they did not do so on the national level.

Our own relationship with Italy was very good. Max Rabb suggested more than once to the Department that Italy was our best ally, and incidentally that perhaps we were the best American embassy in Europe. Certainly we were very active, the ambassador, the DCM which was me, the Minister-Counselor for Economic Affairs who was Bill Whitman, and the principal officers of what were then seven consular posts in Italy. We worked hard at our jobs and we knew the people that counted. I won't say we knew everybody that

counted in a nation of 54 million, but we were pretty good. We brought the Italians along in many cases on problems of concern to us. It was true we didn't bring them along on the Soviet gas pipeline, we didn't bring them along on relations with Libya or Iran, where Italian commercial interests seemed to be the determining factor in the Italian position. Nevertheless, all in all, we had a good position. The prime minister for much of the time was Bettino Craxi, a Socialist and a very corrupt man who had been on close terms with a number of Americans, and who later died in Tunisia after he had been found guilty, in absentia, of corruption.

Q: Did we understand the corruptness under Craxi?

BRIDGES: I don't think we understood the dimensions of it. I think probably the Italians thought we knew more than we did. I mention this in part because of a conversation I had several years ago with a well-placed man in Rome. He told me a story I had never heard, about how ENI, the Italian state petroleum company, had agreed in the early 1980s to a joint venture with Occidental Petroleum, which was then headed by Armand Hammer, who died some years ago and who is now known from Soviet archives to have once been a Soviet agent. ENI was going to have a joint venture with Occidental, and part of the deal was that ENI would take over several chemical plants that belonged to Occidental and ENI would pay Occidental several billion dollars for the plants. ENI asked a couple of British firms to look at these plants and provide a separate evaluation. Each of the firms evaluated the plants, and each came up with roughly the same figure, which was no more than half or a third of what ENI was to pay Occidental. So presumably a couple of billion dollars was going to go into somebody's pocket. ENI backed out of the arrangement. Anyway, I had not known anything about this, although as far as I know I was privy to all our intelligence on such subjects. My Italian friend said "You didn't know that? I thought that the American embassy knew all about that." And although he didn't say so, presumably he thought we agreed with the crooked deal. There were sometimes limits to our intelligence.

Q: How were we looking at the PCI at that particular time?

BRIDGES: Well, we had more contacts in the 1980s than when I was there in the late '60s. The PCI was still maintaining a relationship with the Soviet Communist party. I can't remember whether if they were getting any financial help. I still thought it was appalling that the best opposition party that the Italian nation could come up with was a Communist party. My memory is vague, I have to say I was a very busy person in my three years in Rome from 1981 to '84. They were very rewarding years; it was the most responsible job I had ever had, even more responsible than heading the Executive Secretariat in the Treasury. Rome was a big embassy, it had representatives of over 20 federal agencies. More agencies than we needed, yet fewer than we had after I left. So as the executive officer I was busy maybe ten hours a day, while at the same time I also tried to do my best with representation and reporting. I think I succeeded, but all in all it was a very busy time. I didn't keep a diary, perhaps I should have. All I have from those years is my daily calendar.

Q: Well, looking at the Italian scene, where were you getting your best information? Parliamentarians, or the press?

BRIDGES: It depends on the kind of information that you are talking about. As far as Italy's role in the world was concerned, we were learning most from our friends in the Italian Foreign Ministry and in other ministries. We also saw a wide range of politicians and journalists. I had been not more than a year in Rome when Charlie Stout called me from Bern. Charlie and I had been fellow political officers in Rome in the late '60s. He was an energetic and wise officer who at the time was following the left of the Italian center, mainly the Socialists and the Social Democratic Party. I think Charlie was on good terms with every Socialist and Social Democratic deputy. Anyway, now he was DCM in Bern under the first ambassadress appointed by Mr. Reagan. Basically she was way out of line, and Charlie said he had to tell her that. And she said "Get out." So Charlie called me one day and said, "Just want you to know I'm out of a job pretty soon." And I said, "Charlie, I've got an idea." Robert Frowick, who was the counselor for political affairs in Rome, had asked to have his tour of duty curtailed. So I said, "Charlie, would you think about coming here as political counselor?" And he agreed, and we had then an even better team with Rabb as ambassador, me as DCM, Charlie as political counselor, and Bill Whitman, who as I mentioned before, was our excellent minister-counselor for economic and commercial affairs.

Q: We had a lot of trouble with our political appointees in Switzerland, pound for pound I think. How did you find dealing with the Italian press? Was this a problem?

BRIDGES: I probably didn't see as much of Italian journalists as I used to between 1966 and 1971. But I still kept up contacts with the men I had known earlier, prominent journalists like Bruno Tedeschi and Arrigo Levi. I had contacts all over the place, it's hard to say whether I was concentrating on any particular group. The Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, the number three in the Ministry, was Franco Malfatti, a very fine man who had played a very positive role at the end of the German occupation of Rome, in 1943 and 1944, when he worked very closely with the OSS mission inside occupied Rome. I had the occasion to mention that in print the other day, when I did a review of a new book by Robert Cass on the campaign for Rome. He mentioned Malfatti, and I wrote that I had had the honor of knowing Malfatti. So while the ambassador would see the foreign minister and deputy ministers, I would see Malfatti or his assistant Luigi Amaduzzi, a very fine Italian diplomat who was later their ambassador to the U.K.

Q: We had our representation at the Vatican. Was the Vatican, in retrospect, a player?

BRIDGES: In Italian politics, I think so, indirectly, without question. The Christian Democratic Party was after all a largely Catholic party, but the Church certainly didn't play the role in Italian politics the way it had in the immediate postwar years. By the time I arrived in Rome in 1981 the latest of the personal representatives of U.S. presidents to the Holy See was William Wilson; he was fairly active as a Catholic layman and a

member of the Order of Malta. Mr. Wilson very much wanted to be a real ambassador. He told me once that Mr. Reagan, whose private financial advisor he had once been, had wanted to make him ambassador to Mexico but that he had a large ranch in Mexico, and that somehow it was decided that it was just as well that he not go there. So he took this sort of quasi-ambassadorial job in Rome. He would look at Max Rabb, and Max Rabb had a real embassy, his own communications, his own political and economic and security officers, and so forth and so on and Bill Wilson wanted all that. It was very clear to me that Mr. Wilson in person brought about the establishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and not because the situation required it. It was said at the time that the American Catholic hierarchy did not want to see American diplomatic relations with the Vatican, fearing that it would bring about a larger Vatican fist over the American Catholic church, something which perhaps has eventuated since the establishment of full diplomatic relations. I seldom got to go over to the Vatican. One time before we had an embassy there, we were handling communications from Washington for our Vatican office. We got a cable one day with instructions for Wilson to go and see the Vatican Substitute Secretary of State and say something about establishment of diplomatic relations. So I called Wilson's office and I found that he had gone on vacation. He had one assistant, and he had also let the assistant go on vacation. So I called the Italian desk officer in the Department, and said, "Look, there ain't nobody over there, do you want me to carry out the instructions?" And he said, "Yeah." So I went over to see the Substitute Secretary of State. That happened, I think, twice. Eventually Mr. Wilson got his embassy and after that I was never in the Vatican except occasionally.

Q: The CIA has always played a major role in Italy since 1948. How did you find the CIA presence that you can talk about? Were there any problems at that time?

BRIDGES: I may have mentioned before, when I talked about my first tour of duty in Italy, that the CIA station was clearly to me overstaffed. There were too many people there. Their main duty was to recruit Soviet and other Communist country officials. If that was the main reason they existed, they had more recruiters than they certainly needed. In 1983 a new CIA chief arrived in Rome from London; I had been warned about him by a friend in CIA. He was said to be a rather difficult guy, and he was rather hard to get on with, but we coexisted. I don't think they made any terrible gaffs, as far as I know.

Q: There's been a series of scandals (and I can't remember when they happened) about the leaving behind of-

BRIDGES: I was totally unaware of the program as long as I was in the embassy in Rome. I have to tell you frankly that I knew nothing about it, maybe the ambassador did. By rights, to tell you the truth, if the CIA station told Max Rabb about something like that, they should have told me. Because Max, a very intelligent man, never had a detailed knowledge of Italy. That was not what he operated on.

Q: You didn't find that the CIA was tripping you up or something during the time you were there?

BRIDGES: No, as I mentioned before, there was one occasion around 1970 when a CIA officer tried to call on a foreign ministry official when I was sitting in his office. But no, nothing like that in the '80s.

Q: What about the European Community? How were we looking at Italy vis a vis the European Community?

BRIDGES: Well, on the economic level the reformation of the European Community, of the Common Market, played a positive and not unimportant role in Italy's economic miracle. Certainly in the 1980s we still did not fully recognize how far the Italians had come. In the 1980s the Italians were already overtaking the British as the sixth or seventh largest economy in the world. On the political level, the Italians were trying to be good Europeans. I remember an interesting incident at the time of the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina. Italy was balking; it was not supporting the British position on the Falklands quite as fully as the other members of the EC. We received instructions to go and talk to the Foreign Ministry about the war at some point. I don't remember the details of the instructions, but in any case I went to see the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Malfatti. I carried out my instructions, I told him what Washington wanted me to say, and he said, "I really appreciate that, Peter, but I don't know if you understand just what is involved for Italy." I said, "Well, I know that there are a lot of Argentines of Italian origin, if that's what you're talking about." He said, "Yes, indeed, there are a lot. Above and beyond the fact that many Argentines have Italian blood, do you know there are one million Argentines who hold Italian passports?" No, I did not. "Do you know that the first Argentine pilot who was shot down over the Islas Malvinas, the Falklands, was the nephew of the Chief of the Italian Naval Staff?" I hadn't known that either. Malfatti insisted that they wanted to be good Europeans, but that they could not ignore the relationship that they had with Argentina.

Q: In '84, what happened to you?

BRIDGES: I was hoping that I might get to head an embassy of my own. I would have loved to go to Prague as ambassador, but my friend Bill Luers was Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and my guess was that when he left he would be replaced by a political appointee. By 1984 I had been in Rome for three years and it was time to think about going someplace else. Robert Oakley was our ambassador to Somalia, and whenever he would go back to Washington on consultation he would travel through Rome. I would always arrange for him to meet with senior people in the Italian Foreign Ministry. Somalia was Italy's old colony, and they maintained an interest and indeed were one of the principal aid donors to Somalia. Bob had gone back to Washington, and called me from there one day in the middle of 1984 to say that he was going to be delayed in coming back through Rome and could I reschedule the luncheon I had set up. I said certainly I could. The he said, "By the by, I'm going to be transferred to Washington to be head of counterterrorism in the Department." And I said, "Congratulations, and who is going to take your place in Mogadishu?" And he said, "I don't know, why, are you

interested?" "Well, that's not the reason for my question." "Well, what's the answer to *my* question?" And I thought for a second and said, "Sure, I would be interested, but does the Department already have a candidate?" He said, "I don't think they have given it any thought yet, so let me say a word to a couple of people." By and by I was told I would be the Department's candidate. I told Max Rabb, who said he would be sorry to lose me but would not stand in my way. Then I heard I was no longer the Department's candidate, because the Thursday luncheon club of African-American officers had gone to Secretary Shultz and said, "Mr. Secretary, there are simply not enough African-American chiefs of mission." So Richard Fox, a friend of mine who had been ambassador to Trinidad, would go to Mogadishu. And then the next news was that Dick Fox had decided to retire, so I bounced back again as the Department's candidate. I went on home leave in the summer of 1984, and sometime after I came back to Rome, on a Saturday, my wife and I went for a walk and when we came back to our apartment there was a note from my oldest son, who was working in Rome for the Sinai Peacekeeping Force, saying that Andrew, our younger son, had taken a call from Camp David and they wanted me to call them back. I called Camp David, and soon enough the President was on the phone asking me to be his Ambassador to Somalia, which I said I would be very happy to do.

Q: Well, this is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up next time when you received your telephone call from President Reagan, which I have to say was a very nice way of doing this.

BRIDGES: Let me add a couple of things. They were going to announce my appointment as a recess appointment at the beginning of November 1984. Bob Oakley had left the post some months earlier, so the job was empty and Mohammed Siad Barre, the President of Somalia, was saying that we were deliberately leaving the ambassadorship open as a sign of our bad relationship with Somalia. As a result we decided that the new man should have a recess appointment, if the Senate was in recess. But then somebody said it's not comely for the President to announce such an appointment just before the election. So they didn't, and I think it was a week after Reagan was re-elected that I was announced as a recess appointment, Reagan's first after he had been re-elected. I was asked to get myself to Mogadishu as quick as I could. So, the appointment having been announced in November, I left for Washington for briefings and swearing-in just after Thanksgiving, and I arrived in Mogadishu at the beginning of December 1984.

Q: Well, we'll pick up then.

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Today is the 17th of November, 2003. Peter, what was the situation in Somalia when you arrived? How about internally, and economically? Then we'll talk about relations with the United States.

BRIDGES: I'll answer your questions. I do want to say that I wrote a full and frank account of my time in Somalia in my first book, published in 2000. I say, apologetically,

that I may not be able to add much that isn't in that book.

Q: Still, maybe a certain amount of duplication. I have a feeling that some people will not have access to the book, but they will have access to this.

BRIDGES: They may not have access for now, but I do hope they'll buy it. Anyway, the situation was roughly this: the Somali dictatorship had existed since 1969. Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali armed forces, had taken power in '69 and had led his country increasingly on a pro-Soviet course. American relations with Somalia deteriorated; we broke off aid to Somalia after we learned that two or three ships bearing the Somali flag had been trading with North Vietnam. We were required by the legislation at the time to stop trade with Somalia, and that further exacerbated things. Then in 1977 the Somalis invaded Ethiopia, and by 1978 it was a full scale war and the Somali army occupied a good part of eastern Ethiopia, which was largely inhabited by ethnic Somalis. It was a quandary for the Soviet Union, which was good friends with Siad Barre in Somalia and also good friends with Ethiopia, ruled by Mengistu Haile Mariam. So what shall Moscow do? Should it support Ethiopia against Somalia, or vice versa? Or try to try separate itself from the conflict? In the end Moscow decided Ethiopia was the more important friend and ally, so a lot of Soviet advisors went into Ethiopia, the Soviets brought some thousands of Cuban troops to Ethiopia, and in the end they pushed the Somalis back over the old Somali frontier. Then Siad Barre, when he heard that the chief Soviet advisor directing operations against him in Ethiopia was none other than the Soviet general who had been his own chief Soviet advisor earlier, was enraged and he gave the Soviet government something like three or four days to get all of their advisors out of Somalia. And there were something like 3,000 of them. He did not break diplomatic relations, but he reduced the size of the Soviet embassy in Mogadishu to a very small number.

Slowly Siad Barre turned towards the West and the United States, and we were slow in agreeing to his requests for aid, but in the end we did so. People began to argue in Washington that Somalia occupied a very strategic position. The argument carried, not just in the Executive Branch but on Capitol Hill, and we began to give aid. Then in the 1980s there was a disastrous drought in East Africa, affecting Ethiopia but also Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of refugees fled over the border into Somalia, fleeing the Ethiopian army and war, and the situation was made worse by the serious drought and then starvation. So when I got there in December 1984, we had a huge aid program, the biggest I think in military and civilian aid in all of Sub-Saharan Africa. It amounted to probably 100 million dollars a year, mostly in civilian aid, much of it food aid that went through the UN World Food Programme to feed the refugees living in the camps administered by the UNHCR in Somalia. A lot of it, too, was developmental aid going into projects, but as I made clear in my book there was not a lot of development that resulted. There was also U.S. financial assistance, and military aid which was designed to help Somalia protect itself from incursions, which were continuing, by Mengistu's army in Ethiopia. We didn't want to replace the hundreds of Soviet tanks that Somalia had used to invade Ethiopia, but we did provide them with 100 old Sherman tanks that had been in

the Italian army and that we had refurbished, and we provided a lot of anti-tank weapons. Again, as I said in my book, I'm not ashamed that we provided these weapons, although some of them were used in the Somali civil war. The only ones that I really regret were a half dozen large artillery pieces, 155 millimeter rifles, which later, after I left, were hauled up to the north of Somalia and were used to batter the city of Hargeisa which had risen up against Siad Barre. Anyway, the economic situation was not good at all, development had not progressed the way it was supposed to from our aid projects. I will say that the Western European, the Japanese, the Chinese and U.N. aid projects were in many cases not more effective than our own work.

Q: Were the Somalis a natural trading people?

BRIDGES: It depends on what Somalis you're talking about. The greatest numbers of the population were nomads living in arid grasslands of the interior; these were people who didn't care for the sea and really didn't care for the Somalis along the coast. Then there were fishermen. You had a number of towns spread out along the Somali coast, both along the Gulf of Aden in the north and along the Indian Ocean, which were very old indeed. As I mentioned in my book, there is a document called the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea which seems to have been written about 100 AD. The author was a Roman citizen of Greek origin living in Egypt, probably a mariner. And it describes the ports that you see when you come out of the Gulf of Aden into the Indian Ocean. It tells first of all the ports that you come to in Southern Arabia and India, and then it tells which ports you come to on the right side, along the Somali coast. So there was a tradition that you could say goes back two thousand years. And Mogadishu was certainly an old trading town, as were other towns on the coast. In dhows, which are at best not very large vessels, the Somalis would trade with the Arabian Gulf and even across the water to India. There is this curious regime of winds where the northeast monsoon blows half a year out of the Himalayas and Arabia, and then comes down to the Somali coast, basically going southward, and then stops and completely reverses; starting in April and May you have the southwest monsoon that goes up the coast. So indeed they could sail to India on one monsoon and come back on the other.

Q: You were saying that the heart of Africa is overplayed as being strategic. Was it more a concern of what we had in the Pacific islands, what we called "strategic denial?" In other words, we didn't want the Soviets to build something in Masawa or Mogadishu. Did we keep them out, or were they doing something there?

BRIDGES: The fact is that they had done things in Somalia, most notably two very long runways at airports; one in Berbera, which was 15,000 feet long, and another inland from Mogadishu about a hundred miles, at Bale Dogle. We were given access to those after the Soviets broke off most of their relations with Moscow, but we never put in anything in their place. There was actually some suspicion that we were doing secret things in Berbera and at some point, before I got there, basically the Americans said to foreign journalists, "Take a look for yourselves." The fact is that during the time I was in Somalia, the American presence at the huge airport in Berbera amounted to a little control

tower that was manned by a company that had a contract with the Navy. I think on the average of once a week a reconnaissance plane would come off the Indian Ocean into Berbera and spend the night. So we didn't put any military force into Somalia at all. We did agree to do two port contracts. One was at Berbera in the north, where we agreed to rebuild an old Soviet-built quay for the port. This was not terribly important, it would be for Somali civilian use, but we would have access to it if it came to a war. We also agreed to rebuild the quay at Kismayo, the southernmost port in Somalia, which USAID had built in the 1960s; unfortunately the concrete had been mixed with salty water and it was coming apart. So we rebuilt that when I was there, with the U.S. Navy being the subcontractor under AID, and we did a pretty good job.

Q: One of the great complaints when the whole civil war erupted was that there were too many weapons. Were they our weapons? What I gathered mostly was that they had RPGs and AK-47s, which were Soviet weapons.

BRIDGES: I've never seen a good estimate of what was ours. In any case we did supply the army earlier with 105 mm. rifles, jeep mounted and for anti-tank use, and we did provide some small arms, but I believe that most of the weaponry that was on the streets of Mogadishu during the civil war had come from other places. I read not very long ago in the press about the arms being brought in to Somalia from Yemen. There is a big world arms market, and the Somalis had money to buy arms and they did so. I don't think that too much of what was used in the civil war was ours.

Q: You were there until when?

BRIDGES: I left in May of 1986 and came back to Washington, and left government service. I went back to Somalia once in late 1988, on behalf of Shell Oil Company.

Q: Let's talk about this '84 to '86 period. How did you deal with General Siad Barre?

BRIDGES: I dealt with him at first hand, and rather often. When I presented my credentials to him, he said that he would want to see me sometimes on short notice and that he sometimes liked to see people late at night because that was his working schedule, and that turned out to be the case. So, sometimes with some advance notice, and sometimes with really none, I'd go over to Villa Somalia, which was his hilltop palace, and spend an hour or two with Siad Barre. Usually I would go by myself; I decided it was preferable to have it one on one, because the first time I went I found that he was the only Somali at the table, except for some guy in the background who might have been taking notes. I have no doubt that the room was wired, and there was probably a stenographer who made a record for him of what was being said.

Q: What were the subjects?

BRIDGES: Oh, he always had complaints; he was a wily fellow, he no doubt saw himself as very clever. He complained that we weren't giving enough aid, that we were

deliberately keeping American business out of Somalia, which is absurd. When he told me that, I told him on no uncertain terms that it was his government that was keeping America business out of Somalia. If an American businessman came to Mogadishu, as sometimes happened, he would get hassled at the airport, he would find it hard to deal with the Somalis and frankly he would be asked for money; they were very corrupt. In one case an American businessman leaving was searched at the Mogadishu airport and they found a paycheck that he had brought into Mogadishu from his employer, and they accused him of trading illegal currencies and put him in jail. We got him out of jail, but obviously this guy did not leave with a good impression of Somalia. I told the president that it was not by chance that down the coast in Kenya you had big beach resorts in Mombasa and there were none in Somalia, although hotel chains had sometimes come to take a look. Anyway we had frank conversations. I didn't take notes; my memory was pretty good, I'd take an occasional small note. At some point Siad Barre said to me, "Why don't you take notes? Petterson always took notes." This was Don Petterson, my predecessor once removed. I said, "Mr. President, you know that Somalis have a reputation for highly developed memories. I pride myself on a good memory and I assure you that I will send Washington a comprehensive report on our conversations, with our own recommendations. These are very frank, but if you really like, I will bring my cable next time for you to read." He laughed and said, "Maybe you'd better not."

Q: Were there any things we were trying to do in Somalia?

BRIDGES: We hoped, of course, for a better regime. From what I can judge and from what I've read, in the initial years of independence, from 1960 until 1969 when the coup d'etat occurred, Somalia had a fairly good functioning democratic republic; not perfect, there was corruption. One scholar has written that the political parties were nothing but emanations of clans. Still it was a half decent system. The Italians had come in and provided them with assistance in writing their constitution and legal system. After 1969, in the first years of Siad Barre's dictatorship, he was careful to include the major clans in his system, there was probably a fair degree of support for his government. Soviet style socialism was popular in much of Africa during those days, so a lot of intellectuals who considered themselves socialists probably gave him close support. That changed after he introduced police measures; he got the East Germans to build a prison for political prisoners out near the Ethiopian border, and the situation deteriorated. Still, when I was there neither I nor anybody I knew was forecasting a civil war. I was in touch with a few Somalis who were well-meaning men and who expected a better future for their country than what- (end of tape)

I recall that when I first got to Mogadishu I could walk on the streets and there were tea houses were full of young men sitting, talking, and getting an occasional bite to eat, clearly unemployed, clearly unemployable. There was a population of about a million people in Mogadishu, which had had a population of only 75,000 when independence came a quarter-century earlier. I saw these men as a recipe for trouble, but I didn't think it would be civil war; I thought it would be a wave of crime because of all these dissatisfied young men. But they were no doubt the material used by the warlords when the civil war

came.

Q: Were these warlords a part of the politics at that point?

BRIDGES: Later, during the civil war, there was one so-called warlord, General Aideed, who died a peaceful death after Jonathan Howe tried him for war crimes. I didn't know Aideed. The other one, Ali Mahdi, was a successful Somali businessman who among other things built a hotel, and I met him when we went to dinner there a couple of times, but no one was thinking that either of them would end up leading a civil war in Mogadishu. Now, some years before I reached Mogadishu, Siad Barre had declared that there were no more clans, which was absurd. There were clans, and groups of clans, and as the years went on Siad Barre increasingly excluded from government positions any people who were not from his family of clans, the Darod, and even from his own immediate clan, the Marehan. Still, when I was there the Second Vice President of the country was a leader of the Hawiye, the group of clans from central Somalia. The Minister of Interior, who had a lot of blood on his hands but was also a thoughtful man, was from the Dolbahante clan in the northeast. I can't remember all the clan affiliations, but between 1984 and '86 there were still people in the government who came from various clans, although Siad Barre was beginning more and more to concentrate power, especially economic power, in the hands of his own Marehan clan.

Q: How did Somalia fit together? You were talking about Mogadishu, and what used to be Somaliland, and the interior. At your time, how did they fit as far as the governments were running them?

BRIDGES: By the time I arrived in 1984 the Isaq group of clans, largely concentrated in the north, in what had been British Somaliland, was largely dissatisfied; some were put in jail. At the beginning many were basically dissatisfied with Siad Barre because he wasn't giving them the jobs they wanted in the government. Later he took some very cruel measures against them. So a kind of guerrilla movement formed, based in Ethiopia, that raided into Somalia out of Ethiopia, and without doubt had assistance from Mengistu's regime in Ethiopia. At that point it was not a terribly serious threat to the central government. The first time I visited the north, I was given an armed escort to go from Berbera, on the coast, upcountry to Hargeisa, which was inland and basically the capital of the area. There was a truck in front of me with a machine gun on the roof and all around me there were these young tommy-gunners with AK-47s. Young gunners always made me worried because I didn't know how responsible or careful they were with their weapons, but in any case we didn't run into any trouble. The uprising against Siad Barre in the north was at that point not so serious, but it was getting somewhat worse. At the time I left in mid-1986 you still could travel around the country and not expect to run into difficulty.

Q: Where we were seeing policy-wise? Somalia as being a piece of the great bane of checking the rather nasty regime in Ethiopia? That was not a pro-American government.

BRIDGES: No, on the contrary. In fact before I went to Mogadishu, Vernon Walters came to Rome: a man I knew slightly, who after that was ambassador to Germany and also Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; he was a curious, interesting man. He had come to Rome from Addis Ababa, and he had been sent to Addis, as I learned when I had him over for a drink, he had been sent to Addis by Washington because the Ethiopians had imprisoned an American embassy officer, said to be a CIA officer. They had imprisoned him and they had tortured him. How many governments would dare to not only imprison but torture a foreign diplomat? These were pretty nasty people indeed. We didn't want to see them extend their influence, nor did we want the Soviet Union to extend its influence in East Africa. I referred in my book, I think in a footnote, to a work by Brzezinski, written during the Carter administration, saying that if Somalia fell under the Soviet Union, then the future of Saudi Arabia was in question, and Saudi Arabia would fall. It was a sort of Horn of Africa domino theory. Earlier, in the days of the big confrontation and civil war in Angola, Kissinger had said something to the effect that Angola was the prime meeting point in the great confrontation between Moscow and Washington. I felt that was exaggerated nonsense. Which is not to say that the Soviets didn't put some importance on their position in East Africa; they had built a big naval dockyard and dry dock facility on the coast of Ethiopia. They had a certain military presence in Ethiopia, and of course when a ship comes down the Red Sea bound for the Indian Ocean, it has to pass the coasts of Ethiopia and Somalia, so it could be intercepted. The Soviets, one could imagine, could close off access to the Suez Canal. The Soviets had invaded in Afghanistan in December 1979, and there were people who were saying in the 1980s that the Soviet army wanted to march south from Afghanistan across Pakistan to the Indian Ocean. Again, I didn't think there was much likelihood of that; but unfortunately there were people not just in the West but in the Soviet Union who said these things. So there was talk about using Somalia as a big U.S. logistical base in case we had to fight the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean, but that wasn't much of an argument to me for building up a huge American presence in Somalia.

Q: In a way it was part of the great game of Africa. People were throwing these things around, particularly the Soviets, who were using Cuban troops.

BRIDGES: I have written that to me the Soviet presence in Ethiopia was in part a kind of romantic exaggeration. The Russians did think and still think of history; and they could not forget that in the 1890s they had military advisors helping the emperor of Ethiopia in his war with the Italians. And the Russian church had a longstanding relationship with the Ethiopian church.

Q: Were you getting any instructions from Washington? Did we handle policy there in dealing with it?

BRIDGES: I was very pleased to find that American ambassadors in Africa were given more freedom than, say, embassies in Europe. This was said to be because there were so many embassies in Africa that it was hard for the African bureau to write detailed instructions to all of them. At the time we didn't have much in the way of an intercept-

free telephone system. That is to say, that if you got on the phone and called the State Department, with few exceptions it was going to be on an open line. The open line out of Mogadishu was a terrible line. My wife was working in Rome for much of the time that I was in Somalia, initially for the Internal Revenue Service. So I would go back from my office to my house in Mogadishu in the afternoon, having asked my secretary to tell the Somali central telephone office that I'd like to place a call to a number in Rome. It was terrible. Sometimes the service was so bad that I would be home and the phone would ring and someone would say "Bridge?" and I would say yes, and the woman would say, "Roma." And then I would hear my wife on the phone but meanwhile my telephone was continuing to ring. My conversations with my wife were made somewhat more difficult by the fact that in the background was this loud ringing of the telephone. Let me add that in spite of the lack of classified phone service, in the 1970s and '80s our embassies in Western Europe talked pretty freely on the phone with Washington, perhaps more freely than they should have done. I have no doubt that most of this was being intercepted by intelligence services that had the capability.

In any case, while Washington kept close tabs on our embassies in Europe, I had a relatively free hand in Mogadishu as I think my colleagues did in other African posts. We made use of it, I did myself benefit from this freedom a couple of times, as I have written in my book. One time came when the Somali and Libyan governments announced that they were restoring diplomatic relations, which is something we very much wanted the Somalis not to do. There were rumors that the Libyans were paying the Somalis a billion dollars, which sounds like a huge amount of money for something not worth that much, but Nimeiri, the former president of Sudan, had recently written in the Washington Post that he had been offered several billion dollars by the Libyans. What seemed more credible to me was the story that circulated in the diplomatic corps, that the foreign minister of Somalia, who was the stepbrother of Siad Barre, had been given a million dollars by the Libyans. That seems a more credible figure. Anyway, they resumed relations. They issued a really nasty joint statement saying that Libya and Somalia were going to fight imperialism together. I went to the foreign minister and said, "What imperialism? Are you referring to the United States?" And he said, "Oh, no, we are referring to the Soviet Union." Supposedly they were restricting Libyans to four diplomats, a very small embassy, in Mogadishu. Within a month or two, I was told by our CIA station chief, who was a marvelous man, that there were fourteen Libyans in their embassy. So I said, "Do you think you can get authorization for me to give their names to the foreign ministry?" And he said, "Yes." And he did. So I went to see either the minister or permanent secretary of the foreign ministry, and planked down this list of fourteen names, and said "Where's your agreement now?" I don't think we told them that we knew that one of the fourteen was the kind of diplomat that plants bombs. The last experience of his that had come to our attention was that he had tried to plant a plastic bomb in the American club in Khartoum, in Sudan. I said to the foreign minister that I was concerned about all this mess and that if I should be assassinated, I had told my Deputy, John Hirsch, to cut off all aid immediately and go back to Washington for consultation, and I could assure him that it would be a very long time before he saw an American chargé d'affaires again. And then I said that if a member of my staff was killed,

I myself would cut off all aid and I would go back to Washington, and it would certainly be a long time before he saw me again. Later he told me he had sent a message to the Libyan foreign minister about all this. In any case, as far as I know the Libyans did lay off the Americans. Anyway, having done this I cabled Washington what I had done, and I said, "Okay?" And they basically said, "Yeah." If I had asked for instructions to make such an approach, I don't know what the result would have been but it probably would have taken a long time to get an okay to go ahead.

I did sort of the same kind of thing later. The director of our AID mission, Louis Cohen, who was a very able man, decided to have a reception at his house for all the Somalis whom AID had sent off to the U.S. to take courses. I said that I thought it was a fine idea and I would be happy to attend and make some remarks. So I went to Cohen's house and there were Lou and Barbara Cohen and just two or three American people from AID, and no Somalis. It was time for people to be coming, and I said "What is it?" And Lou said, "There are cops down at the corner and they are preventing any Somali from coming into our house, even our own employees." So I said to my driver, "Come on, Scerif, let's go down to the corner and talk to these guys." They were probably agents of the NSS, the National Security Service. I started talking to them in English, but they made gestures that they didn't understand. I tried Italian with the same result, and my Somali was not good enough to use on this occasion. So I asked Scerif to translate, and I asked them what they were doing and why they were doing it and all they would say was that they were acting on orders. And no Somali ever showed up at the Cohens' reception. Not too many hours after this I learned from our CIA station chief that a certain minister had gone to Siad Barre and said, "Lou Cohen is planning on throwing a reception to form an American party and we have to stop it." And Siad Barre had said, "Okay, stop it." Hence the NSS men on the corner. So I went to see the Minister of the Presidency, Abdullahi Addou, a man who had been for ten years their ambassador in Washington, and I said that this was terrible and I was considering stopping our aid programs, it was simply unacceptable and I was thinking about terminating all aid. A couple of days later the President invited me and the senior members of our embassy to a stag dinner and said that he was very sorry and that he wanted to make up for it, that what had happened had been the action of a subordinate acting without authorization. But we knew that the President himself had done this thing. I reported to Washington what I had done without instructions, and they were fine with it.

Q: Was there sort of a residual life for Americans, or were the Somalis their own people and not thinking about anybody else?

BRIDGES: Well, again, I'm on record rendering a kind of judgment on the Somalis as people, which is not only my judgment. I.M. Lewis, the greatest foreign expert on Somalia, described a certain kind of xenophobia and chauvinism which is often present in Somalia, and I think he is right. There is a Somali proverb that I quoted in my book that says that a man who does not take revenge is not a man. They were very quick to seize on affronts, things like that. Light-skinned foreigners were clearly easily identifiable and the kids would first put out their hands and ask for bakshish, and then you'd turn your head

and they would throw a rock at you. I had Somali friends; two or three of the most interesting and admirable people I met in Africa were Somalis; they were brave and honest men. If we're talking in generalities, I think there is such a thing as national characteristics, but one can easily exaggerate in describing members of a particular nation as being miserly or aggressive or repressed simply because they are French or American or Chinese. Having said this, I did see in Somalis a certain trend towards xenophobia. The Somalis are also very proud and independent-minded, maybe because they have managed to exist in a very difficult, arid environment for thousands of years. The young Somali man in a nomad family will be sent off at the age of ten with a string of camels to forage for, and he will be by himself for a couple of weeks, and he's got a lot of his family's capital in his hand. So they learn very early to be self-reliant and independent.

Q: Were there any major visits while you were there?

BRIDGES: We had no cabinet visits. We had a visit from the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Bill Taft, and his wife Julia Taft who since then has held very responsible positions in the State Department although at this moment she did not. We had visits by two commanding generals of U.S. Central Command, Robert Kingston, whom I had met at CENTCOM Headquarters before I went to Somalia, and his successor General George Crist. We had a visit by the commander of our little squadron in the Persian Gulf stationed at Bahrein. There were some other general officers who came. I was hoping Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, would come, but he was always busy as could be with other problems, especially the problem of Namibia which was still under South African control. We had one Congressional visit, by Howard Wolpe who was a ranking Democrat in the House Foreign Affairs Committee. As I have written, he was said to be very anti-Somali, and I couldn't believe all the things that I heard about him, but the Somalis believed them, and they didn't want to see him; they didn't want him to come and they were not going to receive him at any level. I told the President that if Wolpe didn't get a fair reception, it was going to hurt the American relationship and specifically the possibility of getting new aid money out of the House of Representatives. So Wolpe came, and he was even more uncritically anti-Somali then I expected, and pro-Ethiopian; I could never understand the reason for this, but as I mentioned in my book, David Korn, a good friend of mine, we had gone into the Service together, was chargé d'affaires in Ethiopia all the time that I was in Somalia. Korn described in a book of his how uncritical Wolpe was of the horrid Mengistu regime in Ethiopia. It's difficult to imagine how he could take such a position but he did.

Q: Were there any sort of parties you could talk to? Did we try to sponsor democracy or anything of that nature?

BRIDGES: In my recollection I never had instructions to try to advance the cause of democracy. We did try to advance the cause of economic reform, but that didn't go too far. I made it very clear in a letter that I wrote to all the ministers which I reprinted in my book, that we weren't trying to tell the Somalis how to run their country, we understood how proud and independent-minded they were, but that on the other hand we were giving

them a lot of aid, and as a principal aid donor, we certainly needed to be sure that our aid was being used correctly. Dollars were scarce, I said, and we had to account to our Congress as to what we were doing and how the money was being spent. A couple of ministers told me that they thought my letter was great, privately. But I won't say that it had any effect.

Q: Did the rest of Africa, particularly South Africa and Namibia, play any role?

BRIDGES: Well, the South Africans of course were willing to deal with whatever part of black Africa would deal with them. This was, again, the apartheid regime in South Africa. There were two Somali air forces. There was the regular Somali air force, which flew the planes that the Soviets had left behind in 1978, and there was also a small air force which was flown by white pilots from southern Africa. These flew British made planes, Hawker Hunters, I believe. Every now and then one of these planes would fly over Mogadishu. One time I was at a hotel in Mogadishu and someone pointed out a white man sitting with others, and he was said to be the commander of the small white squadron. Somalia would deal with the devil if he promised aid. Siad Barre had diplomatic relations with the Order of Malta, that most Catholic order, because the Order of Malta had agreed to build them a leprosarium.

Q: It became critical later on. How was the food distribution working and who was doing this?

BRIDGES: The distribution to the refugee camps of the food provided by the UN World Food Programme was in the hands of CARE, the American agency. They had a very large operation in Mogadishu; they had their own warehouses and their own motor pool to carry the food from the warehouses up to the refugee camps, which was quite a long distance. They even had their own mechanic training school so they could have a force that could service their trucks. The head of the CARE operation was an American named Mike Kamstra, a very admirable man. They did all they could, with AID looking over their shoulders to make sure that food wasn't leaking out and being sold to people. The problem came in the camps, and it started with numbers. The Somalis told us that there were more than 700,000 refugees in the UNHCR camps. We thought there were probably no more than 500,000. We could never get UNHCR and the Somali refugee administration to undertake a reliable count. We, the U.S., did not supply food for 700,000, but even so I have no doubt that somehow a lot of food that was destined for the refugees was leaking out and being sold on the market. I have no doubt that Somali officials were involved, and that Siad Barre was getting his share. But there was the question of proving it, and we couldn't. It's not that AID was lacking in auditors, but there are limits to what a foreign mission can do in a foreign country to check on all this.

Q: How were relations with Kenya?

BRIDGES: Somewhat improved. They had been quite poor. Somalia became independent in 1960, and Kenya in 1963. The Somalis expected that on the independence of Kenya,

that Somalia would get the northeastern part of Kenya which was inhabited by ethnic Somalis. But that was not agreed to between the British and Kenyans, so the Republic of Kenya kept to its old border with Somalia, and the Somalis broke off relations with the British and I think with Kenya too. It was a long time before they changed their stance, but they did; the relationship was much better when I was there. There was a very able Kenyan ambassador named John Siparo, and he was really one of the best in the diplomatic corps in Mogadishu. He himself did quite a lot. The president of Kenya at the time was Daniel arap Moi, whose corruption was already becoming evident, but let me give the devil his due; he had his good side and he understood that he should try for a decent relationship with Somalia. He also understood some of the problems of the population explosion in Africa. I can remember that he used to preach to his people, it seems to me I read a speech by arap Moi every time I went to Nairobi, on the need to limit Kenya's population. He would say, "Look at the Europeans, how many children do they have? Two? And they're progressing. And how many do we have? Six? There is a link that we must understand, we can't have huge families any more if you want to get ahead in the world." And then of course at one point Pope John Paul II came to Nairobi, and said an open air Mass, and as I recall his homily was on the general thesis of multiply and cover the earth. So he undid a lot of the work that Daniel arap Moi did.

Q: What about U.N. votes? Was that a productive exercise?

BRIDGES: You would think that as the former head of U.N. political affairs I would be deeply concerned, but I didn't expect too much from the Somalis in the U.N. General Assembly or the specialized agencies. I think they must have voted with the African group, if not with the Arabs. They certainly didn't support us on Israel, but again no one else did.

Q: Where did the Somalis fit? There's black Africa, and then sort of Arab Northern Africa...

BRIDGES: Well, linguistically the Somali language belongs to the Afro-Asian group of languages which includes Oromo, Amharic, and the Semitic languages, both Arab and Hebrew. There are linguists who claim to find links between the Afro-Asian group and Indo-European, and there are some extremist linguists who claim to identify links between all human languages, even those spoken in the New Guinea highlands. Certainly I think that there are links between Somali and Indo-European. I used to sit in my bed at night sometimes, with a big dictionary that had a glossary of Indo-European roots and my Somali dictionary, and try to find possible cognates. And I found some, I made a list of 30 or 40 words.

Ethnically, genetically, the Somalis are somewhat distinguished from many other Africans; many of them resemble the Nilotic peoples, they most often are thin, fine-featured and fairly tall and dark-skinned. But on the coast and in parts of Mogadishu there is a lighter-skinned population which undoubtedly has ties to people who came from Persia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Gulf many years ago. I was just in Vermont last

week, I was invited to speak at a couple of colleges there, but most importantly to speak to the Vermont Council on World Affairs, and my subject was "Somalia, Somalis, and Vermont" because about 12,000 Somali Bantus are being brought to this country as refugees, and some 200 to 300 of them are supposed to settle in Vermont. The Somali Bantus are very interesting and rather sad people. In the early decades of the 19th century, most of the East African coast was under the control of the Sultans of Muscat and Oman. In fact the Sultan of Muscat established his capital in East Africa, in Zanzibar, in 1832. Anyway part of this East African empire's dealings was in slaves, and tens of thousands of Africans were brought north as slaves from what is now Mozambique and Tanzania, up into Somalia in the 1800s. Most of them were settled in the two river valleys in Somalia and although they were animists and not Somali speakers, they eventually became Sunni Muslims like all the Somalis, and began to speak Somali and were adopted into existing Somali clans. But they were always to some extent objects of discrimination, and now a bunch of them had gotten out and were living in a UNHCR camp in Kenya. There were other small interesting ethnic groups in Somalia who were traditional smiths or medicine men, but their numbers were not very great. Most Somalis are ethnic Somalis and they seem to have been there for a long time. But every Somali clan has a mythic ancestor, an eponymous ancestor who came across the water from Arabia and brought the Muslim faith to the clan, and of course brought some new genes. There's no doubt that there was such a migration from Arabia but the number of Arabs who moved into Somalia has never been very great.

Q: What I've noticed is that we have here in Washington a large Horn of Africa community, and these are some of the most attractive females and even the guys are attractive.

BRIDGES: They tend to be a very handsome people. One of the leading models in the world was or is Iman, and she is a Somali; she was the one who appeared in the film Out of Africa as the African mistress of Robert Redford's friend. Many of them are very beautiful, there's no question about that.

Q: Peter, when you left there, how did you leave Somalia?

BRIDGES: I left on good terms. Some people said, "Oh, you left early," although Bob Oakley had not been there that long, and a number of ambassadors had never spent two years. But I had had enough of Mr. Reagan, although I didn't disagree with his Africa policy, or rather his administration's Africa policy. I had incidentally the pleasure of entertaining his daughter Maureen Reagan; she headed the American delegation to the United Nations conference on women in Nairobi, and decided after the conference to come up to Somalia. We were pleased that she came; we sent our military attaché plane to Nairobi to pick up her and several members of the delegation. We took her to see a couple of refugee camps, and gave her a luncheon at home. It was attended by just two men: the Somali foreign minister and me. My wife was there, and a number of Somali ladies also. It worked out okay. But I was ready to leave government and ready to retire, I was not quite 54 years old and I had more than 20 years service. I was still young enough

to do other things in life and I very much didn't want to transfer from Mogadishu back to the Department of State. I had many friends in the Department but it was a place I never liked working in because it was so bureaucratic, and indeed I never liked the building itself; it always reminded me more of a state hospital than a foreign ministry. So I left government. I called on George Vest, the Director of the Foreign Service, in June of 1986 and he kindly gave me two flags and a cup of tea, and I was on my way.

Q: Just very briefly, what sort of things have you been involved in since?

BRIDGES: Well, I went back to Italy where my wife was working, she had started her own income tax business, after leaving IRS. We had decided that our youngest son could finish high school in Rome. So I went back there and looked for things to do and found job possibilities but nothing eventuated, so I came back to Washington in the spring of 1987 and began to realize how hard it can be to make a second career. I went to see everyone I had ever known in Washington and nothing was still working and I started making a second round of calls, and I called again on Diego Asencio, a retired FSO who was the executive director of the Una Chapman Cox Foundation. Diego basically said, "I'm glad you came by, I've got to go off on a mission for a month or two and I need somebody to replace me temporarily, would you be interested?" And I said, "Sure." So the next week the president of the foundation, Harvie Branscomb, came up from Corpus Christi and it was agreed that I would step in for a month. Well, I stepped in and Diego never came back, so I was the executive director of the Cox Foundation for a year. That was from 1987 to '88. In 1988 I was offered a chance to teach a course as diplomat in residence at the University of Virginia, and I was looking forward to that. The president of the foundation agreed that it would be fine if I spent a day or two a week in Charlottesville. But then I heard that a major corporation was looking to hire a former ambassador, and after three or four phone calls, I found that it was Shell Oil Company. They were looking for a replacement for Lewis Hoffacker, who had once been ambassador to Cameroon. So I put in my name, and although the competition was extremely strong from some of my colleagues, I won out. Why, exactly, I don't know, but I remember one lunch I had in Houston with the president of Pecten International Company, which was Shell Oil Company's international subsidiary. The president of Pecten, Michael Forrest, started questioning me about what I knew about Malaysia, what I knew about Egypt, China, Yemen, places where Pecten had contracts. My knowledge of any of these places was somewhat limited, I hadn't served in any of them. So finally I said, "Mike, ideally you would like to hire someone who has a good knowledge of all the places you are working, but you don't know where you're going to be working in the next ten or twenty years and what you really need is somebody like me who knows the world and who knows how to operate abroad and who can learn fast." And that, in retrospect, must have made a convincing argument, because I got the job.

So Mary Jane and I moved to Houston in July 1988. I became the manager of international affairs for Shell Oil Company, I reported to two bosses; one was Mike Forrest, and the other was the corporate vice president for public affairs, Gary Dillard. So I sat in public affairs in the corporate headquarters at One Shell Plaza, and spent much of

my time working with Pecten International Company and other subsidiaries: Pecten Trading, Pecten Chemical, and the large Shell mining company that had interests abroad. I didn't get detailed instructions from either Forrest or Dillard, and because of that I worked even harder than I might have otherwise. I served on a number of boards and committees in Houston. I found Houstonians to be very friendly people, and so did my wife, and she got a job as the president of a development company that was building houses in the suburbs. We were quite happy in many ways in Houston. The climate was not the best but on the other hand I had been in New Orleans and the tropics. I would have stayed there longer, but the U.S. Shell company had been kept out of one geographical area by the Royal Dutch/Shell Group. They were kept out of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, which was in many ways to me the most interesting area of the world. So I said to my wife that after I had five years at Shell, and so had the right to a modest pension when I reached 65, I might go cruising up to Dallas and see if there was not some oil company there that wanted an old Soviet hand. I had not spent five years in Houston when I got a fax one day from a headhunter asking if I knew of any good candidates to be the resident representative in the Czech Republic of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. I thought hard about it, and realized that the best candidate was me. So I called the headhunter and, to make a long story short, the Bank hired me for Prague and I left Shell's employ at the end of July 1993, after five years and four days.

Life in Prague two decades after we had lived there earlier was very pleasant in many ways. The Czechs had come out of Communism as I had expected them to do, and things were booming. The EBRD, however, was a mess, and I ended up working for a fellow who had lately been fired by a bank in New York and who eventually was terminated by EBRD. I left Prague, quite pleased to be leaving, in late 1994. I came back to Virginia and thereafter did some consulting work for a Czech manufacturing company, Tatra, the second oldest automobile producer in central Europe. Then the company was sold. At that point I decided I wanted to spend a good part of the year in Colorado, and I left off spending eleven months of the year in Virginia in order to spend more time in Colorado and do more writing.

I have continued to publish articles and reviews, and so far have published two books. The first one, Safirka: An American Envoy, is mainly about my experiences in Somalia. The second one came out last year, and is called Pen of Fire: John Moncure Daniel. Both were published by Kent State University Press. My second book is the first biography of Daniel, a Virginian born in 1825 who became a Richmond editor, and then got a political appointment and went to Italy as the American minister to the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Savoy kingdom, in Turin. He thought he was going to come back for the next elections in Virginia, but he stayed for two administrations, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, and came back only when a Republican was elected, and that was Lincoln in 1860. He was sorry to leave Italy, because the process of Italian reunification was leading to a situation where he was going to be not just one of several American envoys in the much divided peninsula of Italy, but he was going to be our minister to a newly united Kingdom of Italy. But Lincoln's victory meant he would be replaced, and he left right after South

Carolina seceded from the Union. He had not wanted to see Virginia secede, but once South Carolina seceded and the Confederacy was being formed, he came back to Richmond and took over his newspaper again, the Richmond Examiner, and became probably the main force which swung Virginia from a pro-Union position to secession. Initially he was a very strong supporter of Jefferson Davis, but very soon became a fierce enemy of his. He served twice in the Confederate Army as an officer and was wounded in the right arm. He also had tuberculosis, and when he was challenged to a duel by the Treasurer of the Confederacy in 1864, the Treasurer hit him in the leg, a very painful wound. In addition, he overdosed himself with a popular medicine called blue mass, which I discovered was a compound of chalk and mercury. So he possibly had mercury poisoning. He died five days before the Union army entered Richmond in 1865. That's my second book. I don't know if I'll do a third one, but I'm casting about for subjects. My latest book review came out in the Washington Times paper just yesterday. I continue to do some speaking. I spoke recently at Middlebury College and to the Vermont World Affairs Council in Burlington, and in New York at Colgate University.

Q: All right. I guess this is a good place to stop.

BRIDGES: Thank you very much.

End of interview